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HERITAGE OF BUDDHISM

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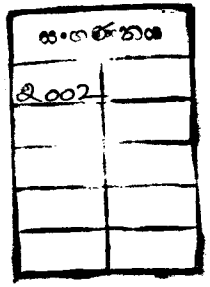

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PREFACE

This study is designed to present an insight into the 'Heritage of Buddhism' in all its manifestations. The survey begins with the Buddha whose message of equality, righteousness, compassion and loving kindness for all brought about a revolution in India.

For over two centuries, after the passing away of the Buddha in BC 483, Buddhism remained confined to a small community of monks and nuns who had taken to the road to Nirvana. The lay-devotees were there to support the Bhikkhus but as a distinct religious movement, Buddhism was yet to take shape. Then came Asoka (273-232 BC), the greatest patron of Buddhism. With his systematic and energetic efforts, he took out Buddhism from the monasteries and made it a national religion.

The period from BC third century to AD seventh century was the glorious period of Indian Buddhism. All the four well-known Buddhist Kings; Asoka, Milinda, Kanishka and Harsha flourished during this period. Many other Buddhist royal houses also flourished during the same period. The glorious epoch also saw the emergence of a number of illustrious saints and scholars who made immense contribution to the Buddhist culture, philosophy and religion. The glorious centuries also saw the flowering of Buddhist art which surpassed all other Indian art. The flow of Buddhist missionaries to the other lands, imbued with the idea of 'Dhamma Vijaya' initiated by Asoka, also continued unabated throughout the glorious epoch. As a result, practically the whole of Asia was transformed into a Buddha land.

As our emphasis is on the 'People' who played a significant role in the rise, development and spread of Buddhism in India and abroad, the second chapter is largely biographical giving the life-sketches of all the Buddhist kings, saints and scholars, and missionary monks who enriched Buddhism during its 1000 years of glory. That the message of the Buddha defied all barriers of caste, creed, colour and status, and was the predominent religion of Indians at one time, is revealed by the study of about 700 inscriptions discovered at the three Great Stupas; Amaravati, Bharhut and Sanchi, and in the Buddhist Caves in Maharashtra. The records of the Chinese pilgrims also prove the popularity of Buddhism in India during this period.

The glory of Buddhism began fading after the death of Harsha, the last Buddhist Emperor, in AD 647. The disappearance of Buddhism from India, the land of its birth, development and highest achievements, is such a perplexing problem that no two opinions agree. The most propagated view by the Hindu scholars is the so-called lax and degeneration in the moral and spiritual life of the Buddhist monks and nuns. In the light of the historical evidence, however, the charge of the fall in moral standards among the Sangha seems to be a mere myth without any relevance to facts. In our opinion, the reasons which led to its disappearance from India were external rather than internal. Not only that, a systematic and calculated campaign had been launched by certain vested interests to oust Buddhism from the land of its birth.

After unfolding the bewildering story of triumph and tragedy of Buddhism in India, we have surveyed the entire Buddhist literature in Pali and Sanskrit, and also traced Buddhism's contribution to Indian languages and literature. The fifth chapter gives an insight into the glorious Buddhist art which survives in situ at some sacred shrines and in all the Buddhist Caves in India. As Buddhism came to life in modern India through archaeology, its artistic heritage is preserved more in the Museums than on site. In fact, majority of the Archaeological Museums in India are primarily Buddhistic in nature. Here we have confined our attention to eight major Museums--four in the metropolitan cities of Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras; and the four site Museums at Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, Nalanda and Sarnath. Other important Museums preserving Buddhist art are those at Mathura, Lucknow, Patna, Bodh Gaya, Sanchi and Vaisali. These have been noticed in brief.

The impact of Buddhism on Hinduism, Jainism and Sikhism has been traced in the following three chapters in order to show that much of the Buddhist philosophy, thought and practices have been assimilated by these religions. The last chapter describes the Buddhist symbols which have been adopted as National Symbols by modern India. The role being played by Buddhism and Buddhist in contemporary India has also been highlighted.

The study is based on all the available literary and archaeological sources on various aspects of Buddhism. These sources, wherever considered necessary, have been identified and listed. A select bibliography of works, other than Pali sources, has also been added. I am indebted to all the authors and publishers of these works. As regard the chapter on Buddhist art, I have personally visited all the sites where Buddhist art survives in situ as well as all the eight major Museums in order to ensure an accurate and up-to-date description.

I am thankful to the Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi; Director, National Museum, New Delhi for their permission to reproduce the illustrations.

D.C. AHIR

CONTENTS

Preface III

List of Plates IX

I. The Buddha 1
II. 1000 Years of Glory 17

Buddhist Kings

Asoka 17
Milinda 33
Kanishka 34
Harsha 38
Other Kings 45

Saints and Scholars

Pali Scholars

Moggaliputta Tissa 53
Nagasena 54
Buddhaghosha 57
Buddhadatta 59
Dhammpala 60

Sanskrit Scholars

Asvaghosha 60
Nagarjuna 63
Arya Deva 67
Asanga 69
Vasubandhu 69
Dinnaga 71
Dharmakirti 72
Others 74

Missionaries

Mahinda 77

Kumarajiva 80
Paramartha 82
Bodhidharma 83
Others 84

Popular Cult

Inscriptional Evidence 88
Fa-hian's Testimony 98
Hiuen Tsang's Survey 102
Summing Up 112

III. Why Buddhism Declined? 115

IV. Buddhist Literature 143

V. Buddhist Art 153

On Site

Asokan Pillars 153
The Great Maha Bodhi Temple 155
The Great Sanchi Stupa 158
The Nirvana Temple 162
Buddhist Cave Temples 164

Museums

National Museum, New Delhi 191
Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay 193
Indian Museum, Calcutta 194
Government Museum, Madras 200
Amaravati Museum 205
Nagarjunakonda Museum 209
Nalanda Museum 211
Sarnath Museum 212
Other Museums 215

VI. Buddhism and Hinduism 219

VII. Buddhism and Jainism 235

VIII. Buddhism and Sikhism 253

IX. Buddhism: A National Symbol 259

Notes and References 279

Select Bibliography 295

Index 309

LIST OF PLATES

On Site

1. Asokan Pillar, Lauriya-Nandangarh, Bihar.
2. General View of the Great Sanchi Stupa.
3. South-East Gateway Front, Sanchi Stupa.
4. The Maha Bodhi Temple, Bodh Gaya.
5. Verandah Painting, Cave XVII, Ajanta.
6. The Chaitya-hall, Bhaja.
7. Verandah of the Chaitya-hall, Bedsa.
8. General View of Cave 3, Kanheri.
9. General View of the Main Shrine, Cave 18, Nasik.

Museums

10. The Buddha image from Mathura, 5th century AD--now in the Darbar Hall, Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi.
11. The Bull Capital of the Asokan Pillar at Rampurva, Bihar-3rd Century BC--now in Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi.
12. Asita's visit to Suddhodana, Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh, Ist-2nd Century AD--now in National Museum, New Delhi.

13. Stupa Slab, Nagárjunakonda, Andhra Pradesh, 3rd Century AD--now in National Museum, New Delhi.

14. Head of the Buddha, Stucco, Gandhara, 3rd-4th Century AD, National Museum, New Delhi.

15. Soap Stone Relic-Casket, discovered from Piprahwa (Kapilavastu) in 1972--National Museum, New Delhi.

16. Bharhut Rail Gateway, Indian Museum, Calcutta.

17. Bharhut medallion, Presentation of Jetavana by Anathapindika of Sravasti, Indian Museum, Calcutta.

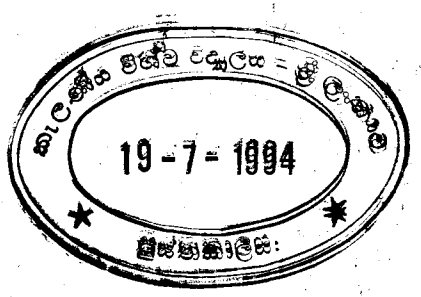
18. The Great Decease, Gandhara, 3rd Century AD--Indian Museum, Calcutta.

19. The Subjugation of Nalagiri, Amaravati, 2nd Century AD--Government Museum, Madras.

20. Translation of the bowl of the Buddha, Amaravati, 2nd Century AD--Government Museum, Madras.

21. The Great Departure.

22. View of the Museum Gallery, Sarnath Museum, inter-alia displaying the Lion Capital of Asoka.



1

THE BUDDHA

Gautama the Buddha was born in B.C. 563[1] at Lumbini, near Kapilavastu,[2] the capital city of the Sakyas. He was the son of King Suddhodana and Queen Mahamaya.[3] As a prince, he grew up in the midst of luxury, beauty and plenty. But slowly and slowly he was getting weary of his surroundings and was becoming more and more contemplative. By the time Siddhartha was 29, his mental make-up had crystalysed. He was anxious to find a solution to the problem of suffering which had particularly pricked his conscience on seeing an old man, a sick man and a dead man in succession while he was on his way to the park. Then his only son, Rahula was born. This provided him an occasion to take the fateful decision of leaving his palace-home, the life of luxury and pleasure, and to seek solution of his mental unrest in the homeless life of an ascetic.

After leaving Kapilavastu, the Prince turned mendicant trekked of foot and reached Rajagriha (Rajgir) which was then renowned as the abode of great philosophers and leaders of thought. Not satisfied, with the teachings of Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta, he marched forward towards the forest of Uruvela, some 40 miles away. The five Parivrajakas whom he had met at Rajagriha also joined him there. Together they started practising asceticism. For six years, the Bodhisatta practised rigid austerities and self-mortification. Still he could not attain

what he sought. Convinced of the futility of mortification of the flesh, he abandoned the path of fasting, and accepted a bowl of rice pudding offered by Sujata, daughter of the chief of the neighbouring village, Senani. Annoyed with Gautama on partaking of food, his five companions left him. Thus the Buddha-to-be was left alone to pursue his path.

Having refreshed himself with food, the Bodhisatta reflected on his past experiences which had failed. Determined to achieve enlightenment; to know the ultimate truth, he came to the large pipal tree on the right bank of the river Neranjara, now known as Bodh Gaya, seven miles from the present day city of Gaya in Bihar. There he sat cross-legged, determined not to leave that place until he had attained the supreme and absolute wisdom. On the fateful night when Gautama was about to attain the Buddhahood, the Mara, the celebrated Lord of evil thoughts and evil passions, swung into action and attempted in various ways to thwart his efforts. But all the efforts of Mara failed, and he disappeared discomforted. Then, on the dawn of the Full Moon day in the month of Vaisakha, Gautama attained omniscience, supreme enlightenment. Thus at the age of 35, He became the Buddha, the Enlightened One, the Awakened One. The Buddha is also known as the Tathagata--the Perfect One; Bhagava--the Blessed One; Sambuddha--the Perfectly Enlightened One; Sakyamuni--the Sage of the Sakyas; and Sugata--the Happy One or the Accomplished One.

The Buddha had discovered a New Way which no one had earlier known and taught. He was even tempted to keep the 'New Knowledge to Himself', and Brahma Sahampati had specifically to implore Him to disseminate the spiritual illumination for the benefit of the suffering humanity. Having enjoyed the bliss of Nirvana for seven weeks, the Buddha got up, gazed with reverence at the Bodhi Tree,. and thoughtfully proceeded to the deer park (Mrigadava) at Isipatana, modern Sarnath, near Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh.

On seeing Gautama coming towards them, the five ascetics, who had been earlier his colleagues at Uruvela, decided not to welcome him saying that 'by abandoning austerities and turning to a life of luxury, Gautama had committed a sin and was not worthy of respect'. But when the Buddha came near, all the five Parivrajakas involuntarily rose from their seats and greeted him.

Impressed by his dignified manners and his personality, they treated him like a distinguished guest.

Unfolding the new path discovered by him, the Buddha said,[4] "Two extremes there are, O monks, which he who strives after enlightenment must avoid, which two? A life addicted to pleasure which is vulgar and worthless, and a life given to self-mortification which is painful and equally profitless". Then the Buddha enunciated the Four Noble Truths: Suffering; its causes; its cessation; and the path leading to the cessation of suffering. And added that the way to Nibbana, emancipation, or the path that leads to cessation of suffering, higher wisdom and peace of mind is the Noble Eightfold path or the Middle path. This path consists of:

(i) Right Understanding (Samma Ditthi).
(ii) Right Thought (Samma Sankappa).
(iii) Right Speech (Samma Vaca).
(iv) Right Action (Samma Kammanta).
(v) Right Livelihood (Samma Ajiva).
(vi) Right Effort (Samma Vayayama).
(vii) Right Mindfulness (Samma Sati)
(viii) Right Concentration (Samma Samadhi).

On the eight factors of this path, the first two are grouped under the heading of Wisdom, the following three under Morality, and the last three under Concentration. But according to the order of development the sequence is as follows: 1. Morality (Sila), 2. Concentration (Samadhi), and 3. Wisdom (Panna).

Morality (Sila) means pure and honest living avoiding killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct and intoxicants. Concentration (Samadhi) enables a devotee to overcome the five hindrances which come in the way of a person trying to practice the Noble Eightfold Path. These hindrances are: covetousness, ill-will, sloth and torpor, doubt and indecision. Wisdom (Panna) means giving up of belief in the efficacy of rites and ceremonies; abondonment of superstition and supernaturalism giving up of all doctrines which are mere speculations.

The First Sermon of the Buddha at Sarnath is known as the 'Dhammachakra Pravartana', the Turning of the Wheel of Law, and constituted the beginning of the Holy Spiritual and Cultural Empire of Buddhism. Annata, Kondana, Bhadiyya, Vappa, Mahanama and Assaji, popularly

known in the Buddhist text as Panchvargiya Bhikkhus, were the first members of the Sangha established by the Master. The sixth person to join this Monastic Order was Yasa or Yasoda. It is said that he was the son of a rich merchant of Varanasi and had all the pleasures and comforts of life to enjoy but he had no liking for all these luxuries. One day he was strolling on the banks of the river Varuna in somewhat dejected mood. Lord Buddha, who was also there, heard him saying ' I am in trouble, I am in distress'. The Blessed One approached him, consoled him and delivered to him relevant discourse which removed Yasa's doubts and he became a Bhikkhu. Four friends of Yasa named Vimala, Subahu, Puranajina and Gawampati, sons of the noble families of Varanasi also became Buddha's disciples. Then another fifty of their friends followed their example and joined the Sangha, making a total of sixty monks. Then the Buddha advised all His first sixty disciples to go and preach the Doctrine glorious. He said:[5] "Go ye, O Bhikkhus, and wander forth for the gain of the many, for the welfare of the many, in compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain, for the welfare of the gods and men. Proclaim O Bhikkhus the Doctrine glorious, preach ye a life of holiness, perfect and pure".

The Buddha Himself traced His steps back to Uruvela. At that time, there lived in Uruvela a sect of fire worshippers known as Jatilas. Their chief, Kassapa, was famous for his magical powers. When Buddha asked for shelter in his place, He was offered the room of sacred fire wherein was the fire serpent. The serpent tried to kill the Buddha but all his attempts failed. When the Jatilas came next morning to see the Buddha, whom they thought might have been killed, they were surprised to see the fire serpent tamed and circling round the Buddha. Seeing the Buddha's power and hearing the Buddha's doctrine, Kassapa[6] and other Jatilas threw into the river their things used for fire worshipping and became Buddha's disciples. When the two brothers of Kassapa saw the articles of the Jatilas floating down the river, they came to see as to what had happened. They were also converted and joined the Sangha.

Accompanied by these new disciples, Buddha proceeded to Rajagriha (Rajgir), the capital of King Bimbisara of Magadha, to fulfil His promise to the king. On knowing that the Sakyan Prince whom he had met years ago and

tried to dissuade him from the path of holiness has since become a Buddha, King Bimbisara hastened to visit the Blessed One. He presented[7] the Bamboo-grove (Venuvana, Veluvana) to the Buddha and became His lay devotee. The Buddha accepted it and stayed there for some time.

There resided at that time at Rajagriha a religious teacher, Sanjaya with about 250 disciples. Among them were two young disciples, namely, Sariputta and Moggallana. Not satisfied with the teachings of Sanjaya, they were in search of something better. One day per chance Sariputta saw Assaji, one of the Panchvargiya Bhikkhus, going for alms in the city of Rajagriha. Impressed by the dignified and pleasant deportment of Assaji, Sariputta approached him and asked "friend, who is your teacher? Whose Dhamma do you profess?"

On knowing about the Buddha and His teachings in brief from Assaji, Sariputta told all about them to his friend, Moggallana. Soon thereafter, both of them became Buddha's disciples.[8] Other followers of Sanjaya also followed their example and joined the Sangha.

From Rajgir, the Buddha went for a time to Sarnath where He spent the first Vasa, Retreat during the rainy season. He then came back to Rajgir via Uruvela. In the meanwhile, His father Suddhodana sent envoy after envoy to invite Buddha to Kapilavastu. But all failed to convey the message. Then King Suddhodana sent Kaludayi, his chief minister, to invite the Buddha to Kapilavastu. On getting the message, the Buddha agreed to go to Kapilavastu after sometime. When the Buddha, accompanied by Sariputta, Moggallana and other monks, arrived in Kapilavastu,[9] He stopped at the Banyan (Nyagrodha) Grove outside the city, where He was first of all worshipped by His father and other kinsmen. Next day, the Buddha accompanied by His disciples, entered the city for alms and went from house to house. When this came to the notice of King Suddhodana, he felt ashamed, and rushed to the place where the Buddha was begging. The King remonstrated the Buddha saying that such conduct was unworthy of his race. "Yours, O King is the lineage of Kings, but mine is that of the Buddhas, who have always begged for food", replied the Buddha. Later agreeing to the request of Suddhodana, the Buddha and His disciples went to the palace where they were served the best of food. After the meal, all the ladies of the palace came to pay respect to the Buddha, excep-

ting his wife, Yasodhara. Then, accompanied by Sariputta, Buddha Himself went to the apartment of Yasodhara. There she held the feet of the Buddha and worshipped Him.

Among the Sakya princes who joined the Sangha were: Nanda, the son of Suddhodana by Mahaprajapati; Devadatta, Buddha's cousin; Ananda, another cousin; Anuruddha, the philosopher. Upali, the barber also joined the Sangha. A touching scene at Kapilavastu was the ordination of Rahula. On the seventh day, when the Buddha was on the round, Yasodhara, his wife, pointing out from the window to Rahula that Buddha was his father, asked him to go and ask for his inheritance. Rahula then went to the Buddha, and with much affection asked for his inheritance. The Buddha blessed him and marched further. But Rahula followed Him. Then the Buddha turned to Sariputta, saying: "Give him the inheritance of a holy life, which is the only treasure that I have". So Rahula was admitted to the Sangha when just a child. As ordination of Rahula deprived Suddhodana of all possible male heirs to his kingdom, he complained to the Buddha saying that Rahula being a child should not have been ordained without his consent. Thereupon a rule was made that in future no one should be admitted to the Order without the consent of his parents.

From Kapilavastu, the Buddha returned to Rajagriha. About the same time, Sudatta, a wealthy merchant of Sravasti or Savatthi, happened to visit his sister who was married to a rich merchant of Rajagriha. On arriving there, he saw preparations being made for meals on a large scale. On knowing that Lord Buddha and His monks had been invited for a meal the following day, he became eager to meet the Blessed One. Early next morning Sudatta set out to meet the Buddha. At the very first meeting, he became a follower of the Buddha and requested the Lord to visit Sravasti.

On returning to Sravasti, Sudatta, who because of his exemplary charity to the poor was popularly known as Anathapindika, meaning 'the feeder of the destitute', decided to build a suitable Vihara for the reception of the Buddha. The only suitable site that could be found near Sravasti was the park of Prince Jeta, son of King Prasenajit. When Sudatta asked him to sell the park, Jeta demanded an exorbitant price, viz. 'as many gold pieces as will cover it'. Sudatta at once agreed, and

proceeded to cover the ground with gold coins from his treasury. When all the ground, except a small piece, was covered, the prince asked Sudatta to desist, and on the uncovered ground Jeta himself erected a temple. Anathapindika also spent a huge amount to raise the magnificent Vihara, other shrines and monasteries. It is said that the dedication of this monastery was ceremonially gone through in the presence of the Buddha.[10] And the Buddha, in order to commemorate the pious gifts of both, ordered that the vihara should be called "Anathapindika arama of Jetavana-Vihara".

The Kosala King Prasenajit of Pasendi was hitherto a supporter of the Jainas and the Ajivakas. Inspired by his son, Jeta, the King visited Buddha at Jetavana and heard a sermon which led to his conversion. Later the King built 'Punya sala' a hall near his Palace for the use of the Buddha.

Another important monastery erected at Sravasti for the use of the Buddha was 'Purvarama'. It was erected, to the east of the city, by Visakha, daughter-in-law of a rich merchant of Sravasti, namely, Migara, a follower of Jainism. Visakha, who came from a Buddhist family, persuaded her father-in-law to take refuge in the Buddha. Migara was so much impressed by the devotion and piety of Visakha that he hailed her as his mother. Therefore, she is also known as Migaramata.

The Buddha spent the fifth Retreat at the Kutagara hall of the Mahavana grove in Vaisali. From there, He twice visited Kapilavastu, first, to settle the dispute between the Sakyas and the Koliyas regarding the waters of the Rohini in a season of drought, and second time on learning about the passing away of His father, King Suddhodana. From there, the Buddha again returned to Vaisali. Soon thereafter, Mahaprajapati, His foster-mother, who had been earlier refused permission at Kapilavastu by the Buddha to join the Sangha, came to Vaisali. Covered with dust and with swollen feet, she stood outside the Kutagara hall, sad and sorrowful. Venerable Ananda saw her in that state and asked as to why she was there. She explained that she was dejected and disappointed as the Buddha had refused to grant ordination to women. Then, Ananda went to the Buddha and pleaded for the ordination of women. Thereupon, the Buddha agreed to permit ordination of Mahaprajapati, Yasodhara and other Sakyan ladies. Thus a separate Order of Nuns[11] (Bhikkhuni

Sangha) came to be established. Once the Order of Nuns was established, the women were on equal footing. The Buddha declared that sex was no bar to the attainment of sainthood. This ensured an honoured place for women in the society. It is significant that at least 12 of the 80 great disciples of the Buddha were women.

Thus within five years, the Buddha had gained considerable following. For the next forty years, the Blessed One travelled constantly from town to town, village to village, preaching His message of equality; of hope and peace; of kindness and compassion. As small rivulets flow towards the ocean so rushed the recluses, scholars, philosophers and lay folk towards the Buddha. The Buddha did not show any preference for any group or class of people. Irrespective of caste, colour or status, He admitted all into the Sangha who were willing to lead a holy life. His disciples, both monks and lay, therefore, came from all walks of life. They included rich and poor, high and holy, and low and lowly. Some of His most eminent disciples came from the so-called lower classes. Not only that, they all enjoyed equal status and privileges and were given even positions of status. For instance, Upali, the barber, was the chief in matters relating to the rules and regulations of the Sangha. Some other low born monks who attained sanctification were: Sunita, the scavanger; Sati, the son of a fisherman; Punna, a slave girl; Kapa the daughter of deer-stalker; Subha, the daughter of a smith; and Ambapali, a courtesan. The Buddha also subdued the robber and murderer, Angulimala, and transformed him into a compassionate saint. There are many such instances where the Buddha emancipated the depressed and oppressed, sinners and criminals besides kings, queens, nobles and other rich elite.

Here are few episodes from the life of the Buddha to show how the Blessed One went about organising His ministry:

The Buddha did not force His views on others. He encouraged the people to think for themselves rather than blindly accepting His words or those of anybody else. On a certain occasion the Lord Buddha with a number of His disciples went to the village of the Kalamas. The Kalamas assembled, and did homage to Him and said that many saints and Brahmins have at different time visited them and explained their religious tenets, declaring them to be excellent but each abused the tenets

of every one else, whereupon, they, the Kalamas, became perplexed as to whose religion was right and whose wrong; but as they had heard that the Buddha taught an excellent doctrine, they begged that they might be freed from doubt, and able to learn what the truth was.

"The Lord Buddha answered,[12] 'You were right to doubt, for after all, it was a doubtful matter. I say unto all of you':

"Do not believe in rumour, nor in anything merely because it is accepted by many or because it is based on some seemingly brilliant authority or some ancient and venerable tradition or some grand wishful thinking or, because it seems extraordinary, or because it has commendable connection: only when after proper observation, analysis and reflection, it is found in accord with reason and experience and is also conducive to general good, then accept it and live upto it".

The story of Siha, Senapati of the Licchavis of Vaisali, shows remarkable tolerance of the Buddha. While welcoming him as His disciple, the Blessed One cautioned him not to antagonise his erstwhile co-religionists. Prior to his coming under the influence of the Buddha, Senapati Simha was a lavish patron of the Jainas (Nigranthas). On being requested, the Buddha accepted him as a lay disciple but urged him not to withdraw[13] the regular alms which he had been giving to the Jaina monks.

Once the people of Alavi, a village near Sravasti, invited the Buddha and the fraternity of monks for meals. On the appointed day, the Buddha arrived at Alavi. A poor farmer, who was keen to hear the Buddha, could not, however, reach the venue in time as he had to look for a lost bull and spent the whole morning in the search of it. Though tired and oppressed with hunger, he, without going home for food, came to the place where the Buddha was seated. After saluting the Buddha, the farmer stood aside. The Buddha asked the attendants whether any food is left. On knowing that it was there, the Buddha asked them to feed the farmer. After the farmer had finished his meal, the Buddha delivered His discourse which gladdened the audience.

While dispersing the monks began to talk about this sympathetic act of the Buddha. The Blessed One then explained that "no preaching could be understood by a person when afflicted with hunger".[14]

The low born Sunita[15] tells his story like this:

"I was born in the low caste, was poor and had very little to eat. I did the low work of a scavanger. Despised and humiliated by the people, I felt frustrated. Then one day I saw the Buddha entering the city in the company of monks. I threw away my baskets and went forth to worship the Buddha, and He stood before me out of compassion. After saluting the Buddha, I stood aside and begged for ordination. The Buddha said: 'Come O monk', and that was my ordination."

Sometimes the Buddha was abused and reviled. He won His opponents by patience and showing the right way to such people. One day, while going for alms from house to house in Sravasti, the Buddha approached the house of Brahmin by the name of Aggika Bhardwaja.

The Brahmin, seeing the Blessed One coming at a distance, became angry and said: "Stay away, O Shaven headed One! There, stay, ye wretched monk! Stay away, ye miserable outcast".

When he spoke thus, the Blessed One addressed him as follows:[16] "Do you know, O Brahmin, who an outcast is, or the things that make a person an outcast?"

"No, Gotama, I do not know who an outcast is. Nor indeed do I know what things make a man an outcast."

The Brahmin having responded, the Blessed One spake as follows:

"The man who is irritable, rancorous, vicious, detractive, perverted in views, and deceitful-know ye that he is an outcast."

"Whosoever in this world harms living beings, in whom there is no compassion for living beings--know ye that he is an outcast."

"An outcast is he, who hates and looks down on others".

"No one is an outcast by birth--and no one is a Brahmin by birth".

Aggika on hearing this, felt greatly ashamed for the abuse he had hurled against the Blessed One. He sought pardon from the Buddha and took refuge in the Triple Gem, and became a life long devotee of the Buddha.

At one time, a monk was suffering from dysentery and lay where he had fallen down in his own excreta. The Blessed One[17] on his usual round came to his residence accompanied by Venerable Ananda, and asked:" What ails you, monk?"

"I have dysentery, Lord."

Is there anybody to attend on you?"

"No, Lord."

"Why is it that the fellow monks do not attend on you?"

"Because I am useless to the other monks, they do not attend on me", said the monk.

Then the Buddha asked the venerable Ananda to go and fetch water. When he had fetched the water, the Buddha poured water on the sick monk while the venerable Ananda washed the sick monk all over. Then the Buddha taking him by the head and Ananda taking him by the feet, together they laid him on the bed.

The Buddha called all the monks staying there and advised them to attend on a sick monk whether he had attended on them or not. "Brethren, he who would wait on me, let him wait on the sick", said the Buddha.

It is said that Ajatasatru, after the murder of his father, Bimbisara, was unable to sleep. So to seek solace, on the advice of Jivaka, the noted physician, he decided to wait on the Buddha. The King left at night by torch-light mounted on an elephant and accompanied by Jivaka and large number of attendants. At that time, the Buddha was sitting with a large number of monks in the mango grove of Jivaka. Having gone quite far in the grove and not hearing any sound, the king was seized with a sudden fear, and said to Jivaka, "you are playing me no tricks? You are not betraying me to my foes? How can it be that there should be no sound at all, not a sneeze, nor a cough, in so large an assembly." Jivaka assured him that there was no mischief afoot: "Go on, O king, go straight on. There in the pavilion hall the lamps are burning, and that is the Buddha sitting against the middle pillar, facing the east, with the Bhikkhus around Him".[18] And when the king looked at the assembly seated in perfect silence, calm as a clear lake, he became at ease, and wished that 'his son might have such calm'. In the dialogue that follows the Buddha discourses on the fruits of the life of a recluse. At the end of which Ajatasatru seeks pardon for his past sins and promised to follow the Dhamma in future.

The Buddha was a moral teacher. He condemned the 'sacrifices' as well as 'self-mortification', and advised His followers to liberate themselves from the cycle of

life and death by doing good to others instead of harming others or harming one's own self. He said the way to Nirvana is through (i) self-control, self-restraint and subdual of the senses, elimination of passions; (ii) compassion on all creatures, men, birds and beasts; and (iii) service of the poor and the weak. Thus Tathagata was the First Teacher in this world who diverted the attention of the scholars and saints, philosophers and rulers from the sky and compelled them to see around them and work for the welfare of the masses. Uptill now the approach to the problem of liberation was individualistic and the seeker did not at all care for his brethren but the Blessed One gave a new turn to this approach and made social service as a pre-requisite to the attainment of Nirvana. Thus he paved the way for the socialistic pattern of society. Hitherto the eyes of the people were always looking for some god or goddess for blessings. The Buddha brought all these gods and goddesses down to the earth and made them inferior to man. He said gods will have to take birth as human beings before they can attain Nirvana. This approach of the Buddha was so original and novel that it revolutionised the ideas of the people. It paved the way for the new values of life and new principles of life.

The Buddha gave courage to man to fight the dogmatism, the formalism and the rigid ritualism. By His most systematic, scientific and bold philosophy He tried to take man's mind away from the pursuit of selfish ends by emphasizing the utter unreality of this life. How bold was the Buddha can be well judged from the fact that in order to fulfil His Mission He had to deny entirely the traditional gods, conventional religious beliefs, institutions and customs. After demolishing all that was rubbish, undesirable and hinderance in the pursuit of Dhamma, the Lord proceeded further and initiated a new cult based on morality, equality, reason and self-help. He declared that the creative urge within us needs no outside help to secure the fruition and fulfilment of life's mission on Earth. His last words very clearly testify this call for concerted effort by the mankind. He says, "Be ye lamps unto yourselves. Rely on yourselves and do not rely on external help. Hold fast to truth as a lamp. Seek salvation alone in the truth".

By the time, Buddha was about to lay down His mortal body, He had become popular with every section of society

and had millions of devout followers around Him. In fact, the people vied with one another in inviting the Buddha for a meal. When Ambapali, the courtesan of Vaisali, invited the Lord and His Bhikkhus for a forenoon meal at her residence, the Buddha accepted her invitation. On her way back she met the Licchavi nobles who had also come to invite the Buddha but were forestalled by Ambapali.[19] They entreated Ambapali and offered her a price for giving up the invitation but she politely declined on the plea that after waiting for a long time she had got the chance and would not like to miss this golden opportunity. After the meals Ambapali donated her Ambavana (Mango-grove) for the residence of the monks.

After having led for 45 years a very strenuous and selfless life in teaching the beauty of charity, the joy of renunciation, the need for simplicity and equality, the Great Buddha passed into Mahaparinirvana at the age of eighty at Kusinara on the Full Moon day of Vaisakha in B.C. 483 but left a great heritage for the humanity.

When the news of the Buddha's Mahaparinirvana spread the kings and nobles from various parts of the country rushed to Kusinara and there was a tussel for His relics and there were as many as eight claimants. The relics were ultimately shared[20] equally by the Mallas of Kusinara, Ajatasatru, the King of Magadha, Lichhavis of Vaisali, Sakyas of Kapilavastu, Bulis of Allakapa, Koliyas of Ramagrama, the Mallas of Pava and a resident of Vethadipa.

There is no doubt that the Buddha was the most towering personality of His times and Buddhism had spread far and wide during His life time. The reasons for the popularity of the Buddha have been very well summed up by Prof. Hopkins. He says:"[21]

"The cause, then, of the rapid spread of Buddhism at the beginning of its career lies only in the conditions of its teaching and the influential backing of its founder. It was the individual Buddha that captivated men; it was the teaching that emanated from him that fired enthusiasm; it was his position as an aristocrat that made him acceptable to the aristocracy, his magnetism that made him the idol of the people. From every page stands out the strong, attractive personality of this teacher and winner of hearts. No man ever lived so godless yet so godlike. Arrogating to himself no divinity, despairing of future bliss, but without fear as without hope,

leader of thought but despising lovingly the folly of the world, exalated but adored, the universal brother, he wandered among men, simply, serenly; with gentle irony subduing them that opposed him, to congregation after congregation speaking with majestic sweetness, the master to each, the friend to all. His voice was singularly vibrant and eloquent; his very tones convinced the hearer, his looks inspired awe. From the tradition it appears that he must have been one of those whose personality alone suffices to make a man not only a leader but a god to the hearts of his fellows. When such a one speaks, he obtains hearers. It matters little what he says, for he influences the emotions, and bends whoever listens to his will. But if added to this personality, if encompassing it, there be the feeling in the minds of others that what this man teaches is not only a variety, but the very hope of their salvation; if for the first time they recognise in his words the truth that makes of slaves free men, of classes a brotherhood, then it is not difficult to see wherein lies the lightening like speed with which the electric current passes from heart to heart. Such a man was Buddha, such was the essential of his teaching; and such was the inevitable rapidity of Buddhistic expansion and the profound influence of the shock that was produced by the new faith upon the moral consciousness of Buddha's people".

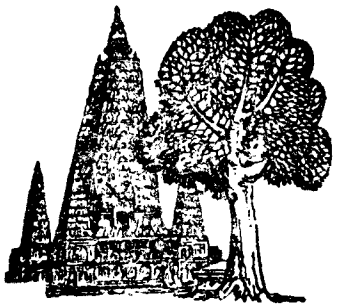
Epilogue[22]

Tributes to the Buddha's Greatness

1. The Buddha was born 2500 years ago.
2. What do modern thinkers and scientists say of him and his Dhamma? An anthology of their thoughts on the subject will be useful.
3. Prof. S.S. Raghavachar says:
4. "The period immediately antecedent to the life of the Buddha was one of the darkest ages in the history of India".
5. "It was intellectually a backward age. The thought of the time was characterised by an implicit veneration for the authority of the scriptures."

6. "Morally it was a dark age."
7. "Morality meant for the believing Hindus the correct performance of rites and ceremonies enjoined in the holy texts."
8. "The really ethical ideas like self-sacrifice or purity of will did not find appropriate positions in the moral consciousness of the time".
9. Mr. R.J. Jackson says:
10. "The unique character of the Buddha's teaching is shown forth in the study of Indian Religious thought."
11. "In the hymns of the Rig-Veda we see man's thoughts turned outwards, away from himself, to the world of the gods".
12. "Buddhism directed man's search inwards to the potentiality hidden within himself."
13. "In the Vedas we find prayer, praise and worship."
14. "In Buddhism for the first time we find training of the mind to make it act righteously."
15. This is what Dr. Ranjan Roy says:
16. "Science has proved that the course of the Universe is a grouping and dissolution and regrouping."
17. "The trend of modern Science is the trend of an ultimate reality, unity and diversity of ego."
18. "Modern Science is the echoing of the Buddhist doctrines of transitoriness (anicca) and of egolessness (anatta)."
19. Mr. E.G. Taylor, in his "Buddhism and Modern Thought," says:
20. "Man has been ruled by external authority long enough. If he is to be truly civilized, he must learn to be ruled by his own principles. Buddhism is the earliest ethical system where man is called upon to have himself governed by himself. Therefore, a progressive world needs Buddhism to teach it this supreme lesson."
21. Prof. Dwight Goddard says:
22. "Among the world's religious teachers, Buddha alone

has the glory of having rightly judged the intrinsic greatness of man's capacity to work out his salvation without extraneous aid."



2

1000 YEARS OF GLORY

Asoka

Non-violence is one of the cardinal principles of Buddhism, and significantly enough it achieved political power too through non-violence. This happened with the conversion of Asoka, the grandson of Chandragupta who founded the Mauryan Empire in 322 BC after defeating the last Nanda king of Magadha. Later, Chandragupta expanded his empire in all directions and by the time he died in 298 BC, the Mauryan empire included the whole of India, excluding Kalinga and the territories beyond Mysore in the south. It also included Afghanistan. Thus for the first time in Indian history, a greater part of India was brought under the control of a single ruler. Chandragupta, was succeeded by his son, Bindusara, who ruled from 298-274 BC and maintained the vast Mauryan empire.

Asoka, son of Bindusara, was born in 304 BC. The name of his mother was, according to the Mahavamsa, Tika Dhamma. The Asokavadana calls her Subhadrangi. As a Prince, he is stated to have served as a Viceroy at Ujjain and later on he was sent by his father to subdue a rebellion in Taxila where Prince Susima, his elder brother, was Viceroy. After the death of Bindusara there was some struggle for the Magadhan throne since Asoka was not the Crown Prince. In this struggle for succession,

elder brother of Asoka was killed. Thus Asoka ascended the throne in 273 BC. His coronation took place in 269 B.C.

How and by whom Asoka was initiated into Buddhism is not very clear. But it seems most plausible that his queen from Vidisa, mother of Mahinda and Sanghamita, was responsible for drawing Asoka closer to Buddhism. As per tradition, the Vedisa queen did not go to Pataliputra but lived in Vidisa. This was apparently due to her religious outlook and devotion to the Buddhist shrine at Sanchi. When Mahinda went to see her mother before leaving for Ceylon she took him to the Cetiyagiri (Sanchi) shrine for blessings. Further, it seems plausible that her devotion to Lord Buddha was also instrumental in preparing the young minds of Mahinda and Sanghamitta for renouncing the world. During their childhood they must have accompanied their mother to the Sanchi shrine. Even Asoka might have also accompanied his lovely queen on pilgrimage to these places while as Viceroy at Ujjain. Thus slowly but steadily Asoka was attracted towards Buddhism by his queen who was the daughter of a wealthy Buddhist merchant of Vidisa (modern Besnagar, Bhilsa) and was herself a devout Buddhist. She was popularly known as Devi because of her religious outlook. Another person who brought Asoka's conversion nearer was Nigrodha, posthumous son of his elder brother Susima, whom Asoka saw in the yellow robes just at the age of nine. Asoka was finally and firmly converted to Buddhism after the Kalinga War after which he declared his policy of victory through Dhamma instead of through bloody wars.

Asoka was fortunate in inheriting a well-established empire founded by his grand-father, Chandragupta. To this vast empire, Asoka added Kalinga, modern Orissa, which he conquered after a bloody war. The large scale massacre in the Kalinga war deeply influenced the mind of Asoka and brought revolution in his character. With this event, his outlook, both in his personal and public life, changed. Consequently, he was drawn to the noble teachings of the Compassionate Buddha.

It happened in about 261 BC on the day of Vijaya Dashmi. Since early morning, men, women and children had been gathering in large numbers in the open maidan outside Pataliputra, modern Patna. They were in a hilarious mood as this was their first opportunity to welcome Emperor Asoka after his victory in the Kalinga war. The city

of Pataliputra wore a festive look with national flags fluttering high in the sky all along the main highway leading to the place of the public meeting.

There seemed nothing surprising in this exhibition of pomp and show by the metropolitan citizens of the Mauryan Empire. The victory in the Kalinga war was an achievement of which they could be justly proud. As a result of their ultimate victory, the people of Magadha had almost forgotten the troubles and turmoils through which they had to pass when the war was on. The Jawans, who had accomplished heroic deeds and were instrumental in annexing the Kalinga, were expecting high awards and rewards from the royalty for their valour and bravery shown in the battlefield.

At last, Asoka, accompanied by the Buddhist Sage, Moggaliputta Tissa, arrived on the scene and the vast mass of humanity burst into cries of joy. When the king and the Venerable monk ascended the rostrum especially erected for the purpose, the public jubilation cooled down. And when Asoka rose to deliver his address, all eyes turned towards him; there was pin-drop silence. The people thought that they were now going to get a pat from the royalty for their deeds of gallantry and supreme sacrifices.

But they were disillusioned when the king started speaking in an entirely different tone. He said, "Brothers and Sisters, after the victory in the Kalinga war we have assembled here today for the first time. Perhaps you have come here to celebrate the victory with high expectations. But I.....I am unable to celebrate this occasion in the way you might have liked. I am fully conscious of the hardships faced and the sacrifices made by all of you in turning the scales in our favour in the Kalinga war. I am indeed thankful to you all for the help and co-operation you gave to government in the shape of men and material. I am, however, ashamed of the large scale destruction brought about by the Kalinga war. Ven. Moggaliputta Tissa has removed darkness from my eyes and illumined my mind. I have now fully realized that for the sake of self-glory, for the sake of territorial expansion and for the sake of humiliating others, it is a crime, a great crime indeed, to massacre thousands of men, women and children; to destroy and desolate the property of others, and to uproot a large number of people from their hearths and homes. It is such a crime which can never be pardoned. Just think of those

mothers who have lost their dear sons; wives who have lost their husbands; and children who have lost their parents in the bloody battle of Kalinga. Will they be happy today? No, certainly not. The horrible results of this mass ruination and untold misery have served as an eye-opener to me. I am grateful to Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa due to whose kind guidance I have found solace in the Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha".[1]

Continuing the Emperor said, "Bhagwan Buddha, as you know, traversed this very land of Magadha about 250 years ago. In His very first sermon, the Enlightened One had laid stress and impressed upon the people to live righteously in accordance with the Noble Eightfold Path. The Buddha toiled for forty-five years going from village to village, from town to town in the great motherland of ours for the benefit of the suffering humanity. It is rather a matter of disgrace for us that we did not adhere to the teachings of such a Great Sage and committed some mistakes also due to our folly. But now, I assure you that this will not happen again".

"Since the message of the Buddha stands for peace and universal brotherhood", Asoka declared with some force, "from to-day onward I shall prefer 'Dhamma Vijaya' to 'Rajya Vijaya'. Henceforth, I shall endeavour to win the hearts of the people, both inside and outside the borders of my Empire, by persuasion and love instead of by the use of force and sword."

After this historic declaration, Asoka dedicated all his energies, power and pelf to the cause of Dhamma-Vijaya. What he desired to achieve, and what he was able to achieve is well-documented in the edicts and inscriptions of Asoka on the rocks and pillars which have since been discovered at 40 places in India (34), Nepal (2), Pakistan (2), and Afghanistan (2). These are at:

India (34)

Major Rock Edicts- Girnar (Gujarat), Sopara (Maharashtra), Dhauli and Jaugada (Orissa), Kalsi (U.P.), Yerragudi (Andhra Pradesh).

Separate Rock Edict- Bairat-Bhabru (Rajasthan).

Minor Rock Edicts - Sahsaram and Ahraura (U.P.), Bairat (Rajasthan), Rupnath and Gujarra (Madhya Pradesh), Brahmagiri, Jaitanga-Ramesvara and Siddapura (Karnataka), Maski, Yerragudi, Gavimath, Palkigundu and Rajula-Mandagiri (Andhra Pradesh), Bahapur (Delhi).

Major Pillar Edicts --Allahabad-Kosam (U.P.), Delhi-Mirath and Delhi-Topra (Delhi), Lauriya-Araraj, Lauriya-Nandangarh and Rampurva (Bihar).

Minor Pillar Edicts - Allahabad-Kosam-2 (U.P.), Sanchi (Madhya Pradesh) and Sarnath (U.P.)

Cave Inscriptions- Barbara Hills-3 (Bihar).

Nepal (2) - Pillar Inscriptions- Lumbini and Nilgiva.

Pakistan (2) - Rock Edicts- Shahbazgarhi and Mansehra.

Afghanistan (2) - Rock Edicts - Kandhar and Lamghan near Jalalabad.

All the inscriptions found in India and Nepal are composed in various forms of Prakrit and are written in the Brahmi script. The two inscriptions at Shahbazgarhi and Mansehra in Pakistan are written in Kharoshthi. An inscription discovered at Kandhar in Afghanistan is bilingual, in Greek and Aramaic. In all the records, Asoka refers to himself, as 'Devanampiya Piyadasi Raja' (the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadesi). Only in two versions of Minor Rock Edict[2] I, Asoka's name is mentioned.

In his edicts, Asoka time and again refers to 'Dhamma' and exhorts one and all to inculcate the practice of Dhamma. What was meant by 'Dhamma' by Asoka has been a subject of comment by the historians. Some scholars have even opined that 'Asoka's Dhamma' was his own innovation and it had nothing to do with the 'Buddha-Dhamma'. This is not a correct interpretation. Asoka propagated Dhamma taught by the Buddha. This is very well confirmed by the evidence that Asoka himself provides in his edicts.

In one of the earliest rock edicts to be issued by Asoka, he says:[3]

> " A little more than two years and a half passed since I am avowedly a lay follower of the Buddha. But I was not vigorously exerting myself in the cause of Dhamma for the first one year. However, it is little more than a year that I am devotedly attached to the Sangha and exerting myself vigorously".

The above edict, now known as Minor Rock Edict I, and issued in about 257 B C has been discovered at as many as 14 places in India. This means that Asoka gave widest publicity to his increasing devotion to the Buddha-Dhamma.

In the third Minor Rock Edict, which has been discovered only at Bairat near Jaipur, Rajasthan, Asoka says:[4]

> " King Piyadasi of Magadha salutes the monks of the Sangha, wishes them good health and comfort in their movement, and addresses them in the following words. It is known to you, Venerable Sirs, how far extends my reverence for and faith in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. Whatever, Venerable Sirs, has been said by the Lord Buddha, all that is well-said. But Venerable Sirs, I deem it proper to speak out what appears to me the way as to how the true Dhamma may be of long duration".

Asoka then goes on to list seven texts[5] of Dhamma (for details please see foot note 5), and directs that the monks and nuns may constantly listen to and remember these texts. Likewise lay men and lay women too.

Asoka not only suggested constant study of certain Buddhist texts by the Buddhist monks, nuns and the laity, he also took keen interest in the affairs of the Sangha. He even endeavoured to check schism in the Sangha. In the Minor Pillar Edict I found at Allahabad-Kosam, Sanchi and Sarnath, Asoka addresses the Buddhist monks in these words:[6]

> " No one is to cause dissention in the Order, whoever creates a schism in the Order, whether monk or nun, is to be dressed in white garments, and to be put in a place not inhabited by monks or nuns. For it is my wish that the Order should remain united and endure for long".

Asoka's own words, quoted above, make it clear that Asoka was a devout Buddhist. Not only he refers to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, the Buddha is also represented in the Edicts by the well-known Buddhist symbol of the White Elephant[7] which is indicated by an inscription at Girnar at the end of R.E. XIII, and represented

by a figure cut on the rock at Dhauli, and incised at Kalsi with the lable 'gajatame', "the most perfect elephant". The elephant stands for the Buddha's descent on earth as His mother saw in dream, before conception, a white elephant entering her womb. The four animals topping the Asokan pillars are: The Elephant, the Bull, the Horse and the Lion. These animals were chosen by Asoka as they are associated with the Buddha. The Elephant typifies Conception, the Bull indicates Nativity, Buddha's birth as a human being, the Horse stands for the Buddha's Renunciation, and the Lion represents Buddha as the great Teacher.

The essence of Dhamma has been elucidated by Asoka in five principal edicts, viz. three rock edicts and two pillar edicts.

In the third Major Rock Edict found at Girnar in Gujarat, Asoka defines Dhamma in these words:[8]

> " It is good to be obedient to one's mother and father, friends and relatives, to be generous to brahmanas and sramanas, it is good not to kill living beings, and it is good not only to spend little, but to own the minimum of property".

In the fourth Major Rock Edict, at Girnar again, Asoka says:[9]

> " Through his (Asoka's) instruction in Dhamma, abstention from killing and non-injury to living beings, deference to relatives, brahmans and sramanas, obedience to mother and father, and obedience to elders have all increased as never before for centuries".

Again in the Major Rock Edict No. XI found at Kalsi near Dehradun in Uttar Pradesh, Asoka says:[10]

> " There is no gift comparable to the gift of Dhamma, the praise of Dhamma, the sharing of Dhamma, fellowship in Dhamma. And this is-- good behaviour towards slaves and servants, obedience to mother and father, generosity towards friends, acquaintances, and relatives and towards sramanas and brahmans, and abstention from killing living beings".

Of the seven Major Pillar Edicts, Dhamma is specifically defined in two edicts. In edict No. II, on the Topra Pillar now standing at Ferozshah Kotla, Delhi, Asoka says:[11]

> " The practices of Dhamma are meritorious. But what does Dhamma consist of? It consists of the least amount of sin, many virtuous deeds, compassion, liberality, truthfulness and purity".

Again in edict No. VII on the same Delhi-Topra Pillar, Asoka says:[12]

> " My intention is that the noble deeds of Dhamma and the practice of Dhamma, which consist of compassion, liberality, truthfulness, purity, gentleness and goodness, will thus be promoted among men".

The Asokan Edicts were primarily addressed to the people in general, the lay men and lay women. Hence, without referring to the purely Buddhistic terms like the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path and Nirvana, Asoka lists in simple language the virtues, the path that a lay person ought to follow. And while doing so, he lists the virtues keeping in view the 'layman's code of conduct' as laid down by the Buddha in the Sigala-sutta (No. 31 of the Digha-Nikaya). The six sets of reciprocal duties enumerated in this sutta are: between parents and children; between pupils and teachers; between husband and wife; friends and companions; masters and servants; and lastly the laity and Sangha. In each case, there are five duties, except in the case of Sangha's duties to householders, which are six. In Asoka's view, "The quintessence of Dhamma consisted in sila or good conduct, and not in creed, rituals, ceremonies or worship." Therefore, he endeavoured to inculcate the spirit of True Dhamma--self-control, purity of heart, kindness, compassion, truthfulness and goodness to all. In other words, he preached morality, the ethical discipline, the virtues which lead to the attainment of happiness in this world and the next.

In pursuance of his policy of Dhamma-Vijaya (Moral Conquest). Asoka launched a concerted campaign to mitigate the suffering of the people, rather all living beings, in his empire. He undertook the provision of public works

of utility on such a large scale which was never witnessed before in India. With a view to making travelling comfortable and safe, he planted shady trees on highways, dug wells and constructed rest houses at appropriate places. He opened hospitals for men and animals alike. He also laid botanical gardens for the rare medicinal plants and healing shrubs (R.E.II). In order to improve the social conditions, Asoka ordered abolition of: sacrificial slaughter of animals; samajas (merry-making of a kind, accompanied by animal fights and feasting with consumption of meat etc.); hunting and other similar amusements (R.E.I). He devoted all his time and energy to the affairs of the State, and made arrangements to receive reports on state business at all hours. In Rock Edict VI, he says,[13] "In times past, there was not before at all hours discharge of administrative business or the receiving of reports. So by me has thus been arranged; at all hours, when I am eating or in the harem, or in the inner apartments, or even in the ranches, or in the place of religious instruction, or in the parks, everywhere, Prativedakas are posted with instructions to report on the affairs of my people. In all places do I dispose of the affairs of the people". Asoka thus spared no efforts for the weal and happiness of his subjects. He says, "There is no greater duty for him than doing good to all."[14] (R.E. VI). The benevolent Asoka goes on to say: "All men are my children.[15] I wish happiness and welfare to all men, as I would wish to my own children." (Separate Rock Edict-Dhauli Text).

Asoka was even anxious to promote the welfare and happiness of the people living beyond his domain and he organised missionary work in the foreign countries and made arrangements for the supply of medical aid and other facilities for the people not directly under him.

Asoka toned his administration on the basis of the Dhamma tenets and emphasized the supremacy of the moral laws. To begin with, he commanded all his officers to tour the countryside atleast once in five years for missionary work among the masses (R.E.III). Later, he created a separate Department of Missionary Service under the officers styled as Dhamma-Mahamataras, Ministers of Religion or Morals, for propagation of piety among his subjects (R.E.V). He also held regular religious conferences for preaching and discussing the Dhamma; and organised religious shows and processions (R.E.V). Further,

Asoka initiated his own pious tours or 'pilgrimages of piety' (dhamma-yatra) to the sacred Buddhist shrines (R.E. VIII). He went on pilgrimage to Lumbini, the birth place of the Buddha, to Sambodhi, the seat of Buddha's Enlightenment, to Sarnath, the site of His First Sermon, to Kushinara, the scene of Buddha's Maha-parinirvana, and other holy places sanctified by the Buddha. Asoka also opened Dhamma centres and endeavoured to popularise the practice of Buddhist meditation (vipassana). Asoka specifically speaks of the supremacy of 'meditation' in the Pillar Edict VII. He says:[16] "This advance of Dhamma of the people has been promoted only by two ways, by regulation of Dhamma (dhamma-niyame) and by inner meditation (nijhati). But of these (two), regulation of Dhamma is of little effect, but by inner meditation (Dhamma may be promoted) greatly." The selection of the seven Buddhist texts recommended by Asoka for study by the Buddhist monks, nuns and the laity also supports this view. If we just have a look at the three suttas chosen by Asoka, from the Sutta-Nipata, it is apparent that all the three suttas recommended by him lay emphasis on 'meditation'.[17]

Asoka also convened a Buddhist Council, known as the Third Council, which was held at Pataliputra (Patna) in about 253 BC under the Presidentship of Maggaliputta Tissa. It was attended by 1000 eminent Buddhist monks and lasted nine months. At this Council, the Pali Tripitaka was rehearsed and given final shape. In order to give impetus to the propagation of Dhamma, Asoka is said to have built 84,000 stupas throughout his empire. In Kashmir alone, he is said to have built 500 monasteries. He is also said to have given the whole of Kashmir for the benefit of the Buddhist Sangha. Asoka is also credited with the founding of Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir. Another city founded by him was Deo-Patan (Deva-patana) in Nepal. As a result of all this, the sound of 'Dhamma-ghosha' or 'dhamma-drum' reverberated throughout his empire (R.E.IV), and the Dhamma spread far and wide.

While keen to preach and propagate the marvellous teachings of the Buddha, Asoka showed equal respect for the other religious sects. Even though an ardent Buddhist himself, he asks no one to adopt Buddhism. He treated the Buddhist monks and other ascetics alike. The first Buddhist monarch was anxious to see that all the communities live in peace and like brothers. He exhorted all to show respect and reverence for the views of others so far as they were conducive to general good.

With his systematic and energetic efforts, Asoka took out the gospel of the Buddha from the caves and monasteries and made it a world religion. But for Asoka, Buddhism would not have perhaps witnessed the missionary work which he inspired and initiated. Asoka's missionary spirit was, therefore, responsible for the spread of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Burma and other countries around.

Asoka speaks of his missionary work in two edicts. In Rock Edict V, he says,[18] "These officers (Dhamma-Mahamatras) are occupied with all the religious sects for the establishment of Dhamma and for the promotion of Dhamma as well as for the welfare and happiness of those who are devoted to Dhamma even among the Yavanas, Kambojas and Gandharas, the Rashtrikas and Paitryantikas and the other people dwelling about the western borders of my dominions". Again in Rock Edict XIII, he says,[19] "So, what is conquest through Dhamma is now considered to be the best conquest by the Beloved of the Gods. And such a conquest has been achieved by the Beloved of the Gods not only here in his own dominions but also in the territories bordering on his dominions as far away as at the distance of six hundred Yojanas (about 1500 mile), where the Yavana king named Antiyoka is ruling and where, beyond the kingdom of the said Antiyoka, four other kings named Turamaya, Antikini, Maka and Alikasundra are also ruling, and towards the south, were the Cholas and Pandyas are living as far as Tamrahparni (Sri Lanka)".

Thus Asoka sent missionaries to spread the Dhamma in the five foreign kingdoms of Syria, Egypt, Cyrene, Epirus and Macedonia. He also sent missionaries to the south as far as Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Within his own empire also, he sent missionaries to various parts of the country. The names of some of the missionaries and the countries to which they were assigned as recorded in the Mahavamsa[20] are:

Majjhantika to Kashmir and Gandhara; Mahadeva to Mahisamandala (Mysore); Rakkhita to Vanvasi (North Kanara in Karnataka); Yona Dhammarakkhita to Aparantaka; Mahadhammarakkhita to Maharashtra; Maharakkhita to Yonaloka (Greek settlements of North-West India); Majjhima to Himavanta (Himalayan region); Sona and Uttara to Suvarnabhumi (Burma); and Mahinda, Itthiya,

Uttiya, Sambala, Bhadasara to Lanka (Ceylon). While confirming this tradition, Dipavamsa, another Ceylonese chronicle, introduces a slight deviation. According to it, Majjhima, who was deputed to the Himavanta, had with him four other monks, namely, Kasapagota, Dudubhissara, Sahadeva, and Mulkadeva. The tradition of the missionaries sponsored by Asoka has since been confirmed by the archaeological evidence. The body-relics of Majjhima, Kasapagota, and Dudubhissara have since been discovered[21] from stupas at Sanchi, and Sonari in the same area.

Of all the missions sponsored by Asoka, the one led by Mahinda, his son, to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) was the most successful. Relations between Asoka and Tissa, the king of Ceylon, became so cordial that on a request from the Ceylonese King, Asoka sent a sapling of the original Bodhi Tree, sitting under which Gautama had attained Enlightenment, through his daughter, Sanghamitra. This Bo-sapling was planted at Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka, and still survives.

In the annals of kingship, there is none equal to Asoka both as a man and as a ruler. By his good deeds he earned the gratitude of the entire humanity, rather of all living beings. So we call him 'Asoka the Great'. We also call him 'Dhammasoka' because Asoka "governed the people according to Dhamma, administered justice according to Dhamma, and protected them according to Dhamma." (P.E.I.). For Asoka, the practice of Dhamma was the most vital thing. The all-pervasive force in his edicts is 'Dhamma'. He uses the term 'Dhamma' as many as 125 times in his inscriptions. Asoka not only propagated the Buddha-Dhamma but he also lived his life in accordance with the tenets of Dhamma. He preached what he practised. The Pious Asoka rigorously followed the Law of Piety in his private life. He prohibited the slaughter of animals on sacred days like the Buddhist Upostha days. He stopped the killing of animals for the royal kitchen and gave up meat-eating completely. During his reign, no birds or animals were killed merely for the sake of fun, which is called sport, or for sacrificial purposes. He went on pilgrimages of piety instead of going on hunting expeditions. Verily, his titles 'Devanampiya' (dear to the gods) and Priyadarsi (of amiable appearance or who sees with affection) indicate his good deeds most appriopriately.

Judged from all angles, Asoka's reign was unique

one. In fact this period was the brightest period of Indian history. During this period the masses enjoyed the freedom of equal opportunity in every walk of life. Not only the cultural values were judged in proper perspective for the first time in this sub-continent but its ambassadors of culture went abroad and spread its culture. Under Asoka's able and energetic leadership, India reached the high watermark of spiritual and material progress, and came to occupy the foremost place amongst the civilized nations of the world. Whether we may call him by the appellation of Dhammasoka, Asoka the Righteous or Asoka the Great, this illustrious son of India deserves each and every appellation as well as respect and reverence from the entire world. He was truly a versatile genius, statesman and administrator, religious and social reformer, and philosopher and saint. In the words of H.G. Wells, Asoka is one of the six greatest men of history (the others being Buddha, Socrates, Aristotle, Roger Bacon and Abraham Lincoln). Again according to H.G. Wells, "Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history, their majesties and graciousnesses and serenities and royal highnesses and the like, the name of Asoka shines and shines almost alone, like a star".[22]

Within fifty years of Asoka's death in 232 BC the Mauryan Empire collapsed. While searching for the reasons of disintegration of such a vast Empire the historians have made vain efforts to find fault with Asoka and his love for the Dhamma. Some say the root-cause of the downfall of the Mauryan Empire was Asoka's doctrine of Ahimsa which resulted in eschewing aggressive militarism thereby impairing the military efficiency. But this argument seems to be devoid of any essence.

In the Jaugada Rock Edict, the great King, says,[23] "The following question may occur to the people of the unconquered territories lying *beyond the border* of my dominions: What is the King's desire in respect of us?' The following alone is my wish which should be realised by the peoples living on the borders, viz. that King desires that they should be unworried on his account, that they should have confidence in him, and that they should expect from him the only happiness and no misery. The following should also be realized by them, viz. that the King will forgive them in respect of any offence that is pardonable." Is there any necessity for the peoples *beyond the borders* to fear a weak King? Certainly not. It is only the might

of a nation which arouses suspicious fears. Is this not sufficient evidence that Asoka's rule was militarily quite powerful and people along the borders of his empire were aware of the vast resources at his disposal? To alley their fears he had in fact to announce publicly that they need not worry since he had no intention of harassing them so far they behaved properly.

Even if Asoka had pursued the path of violence, is there any guarantee that the Mauryan Empire would have continued till eternity. Perhaps not. It must be remembered that the Empires come and go for various reasons which may be internal, external, social or political. Is it not a fact that the Moghul Empire started disintegrating immediately after Aurangzeb who followed the path of loot and plunder and ruthless dictatorship? Further, the Sikh Empire crumbled immediately after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the lion of Punjab. Why? Not because the Sikhs were militarily weak but because of the disunity and factional fights among his successors. In view of this evidence, therefore, the reasons for the Mauryan debacle must be found somewhere else.

Again some say that Asoka had become too much religious minded and he squandered away the coffers of the Empire for the sake of preaching the Dhamma. There is no basis for this accusation as well. Asoka, was no doubt a pious and devout Buddhist but he knew well his responsibilities as a King and duties as a Buddhist. He well balanced all his activities and did not favour Buddhists at the cost of State. His love for the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha was so great that he was prepared to sacrifice even his life for their cause but when the question of State taxes to be levied on the sacred Buddhist places came he showed his primary concern for the State Revenues. The example of Lumbini, the birth place of the Buddha, would be enough to support our view. Mark, what the King says in his Pillar Edict at Lumbini. He says,[24] 'Twenty years after his coronation, King Priyadarsi, Beloved of the Gods, visited this spot in person and offered worship at this place, because the Buddha, the Sage of the Sakyas, was born here. He caused to be built a stone wall around the place and also erected this stone pillar to commemorate his visit. Because the Lord Buddha was born here, he made the village of Lumbini free from taxes and subject to pay only one-eighth of the produce as land revenue instead of the usual rate.

Could a devout Buddhist King like Asoka not make Lumbini free of *all taxes?* Surely, he could. But because he did not want the State Revenues to dwindle he only changed the rates of the tax. What little benefit would have accrued to the residents of the village of Lumbini can be judged from the fact that the usual rate of land tax was one-sixth. Could such a cautious monarch squander away the public money? The answer is obvious no.

The primary reason for the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire seems to be two-fold; incompetency of the later Maurya Kings and the revolt by the Brahmins. It seems none of Asoka's sons or grand-sons was capable enough to manage such a vast Empire. Their hold on the North-Western India was weakened by the invasions of the Greeks who ultimately succeeded in carving out a Kingdom in Punjab. A crushing blow to the Mauryan Empire was, however, given by Pushyamitra, the Commander-in-Chief of the last Mauryan King, Brihadratha, who assassinated the King and usurped the throne of Magadha in 185 B.C. The murder of this Buddhist King by his Brahmin Commander-in-Chief needs some explanation. In the words of the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar,[25] "The murder of Brihadratha by Pushyamitra has unfortunately passed unnoticed. At any rate it has not received the attention it deserves. It is treated by historions as an ordinary incident between two individuals as though its origin lay in some personal quarrel between the two. Having regard to the consequences it was an epochmaking event. Its significance cannot be measured by treating it as a change of dynasty, the Sungas succeeding the Mauryas. It was a political revolution as great as the French Revolution, if not greater. It was a revolution, a bloody revolution, engineered by the Brahmins to overthrow the rule of the Buddhist Kings. That is what the murder of Brihadartha by Pushyamitra means."

Apparently the Brahmins were not happy with the policies of Asoka and his successors because they had forbidden animal sacrifices, stopped hunting, discouraged meat-eating and drinking, tried to reform the Samajas, a kind of melas which had become centres of vices and lost much of their utility. Over and above this, the Buddhist Kings did not attach any importance to the castelables. The Brahmins who had intense love for their castemark and the bloody sacrifices were feeling sore about the Buddhist rule. Further, they were jealous of the fact

that Asoka had patronised Buddhism beyond their expectations. The Brahmins were thus hostile to the Mauryan Empire and their discontentment and jealousy played an important part in bringing about the disruption of the Empire. Earlier they had all along protested against the prohibition of bloody sacrifices but finding Asoka's successors weak and incompetent they rose in revolt--and instigated the Hindus to throw off the allegiance of the Buddhist Mauryas. Thus they got rid of the Buddhist rule by foul means. Prior to the assassination of Brihadratha Maurya there were two rules of the customary laws of the land which were accepted by all as sacrosanct and invoilable. The first rule made it sin for a Brahmin even to touch a weapon. The second made the King's person sacred and regicide a sin. Pushyamitra transgressed both these rules. Surely, single-handed he would not have been in a position to break the well established customary law of the land. Some sort of conspiracy and support from the other people of his faith must have encouraged him. This is evident from the Manu Smriti which came into existence after the year 185 BC. To quote again Dr. Ambedkar,[26] "Tiumphant Brahmanism wanted a sacred text, infallible in its authority, to justify their transgressors. A striking feature of the Manu Smriti is that it not only makes Chaturvarna the law of the land; it not only makes animal sacrifice legal but it goes to state when a Brahmin could justifiably resort to arms and justifiably kill the king. In this the Manu Smriti has done what no prior Smriti has done. It is a complete departure. It is a new thesis. Why should the Manu Smriti do this? The only answer is it had to strengthen the revolutionary deeds committed by Pushyamitra by propounding philosophic justification."

The later actions of Pushyamitra fully confirm the sinister motive of the Brahmanic revolution. Immediately after usurping power, he revived the animal sacrifice which was abolished by Asoka and persecuted Buddhism in a cruel manner. He is reported to have destroyed and demolished numerous monasteries and killed monks. He is said to have declared an award of one hundred gold coins on the head of each Buddhist monk.

Thus the downfall of the Mauryan Empire was hastened by the rising forces, both inner and outside, which could not be checked in time by the successors of Asoka.

Milinda

118202

Buddhism received a set back with the rise of Pushyamitra who murdered Brihadartha, the last Maurya King, in 185 BC but it was immediately compensated to some extent with the conversion of Menander or Milinda, a Greek King who ruled over North-West India in the latter part of the second century BC. The Indo-Greek kingdom of Milinda lay between Gandhara and Mathura which included Gandhara, Sind, Punjab, Kathiawar and western Uttar Pradesh. Sagala or Sakala (modern Sialkot), an old and historic city, was the capital of Milinda. He ruled from 161 BC till his death in about 130[27] BC.

Apart from being a competent soldier and warrior, Milinda was a scholar of repute and was anxious to understand the essence of the religion of India, his new home. With this object in view, he approached many Indian teachers but none could satisfy his curious mind. So he was disheartened and exclaimed. "Ah, the whole of India is empty prattle. There is none who is capable of debating with me and dispelling my doubts." Under such circumstances, the King one day, per chance, saw a Buddhist monk, named Nagasena, passing nearby his palace. The King was very much impressed and attracted by the calm and serene personality of Nagasena. He summoned the monk to his palace and questioned him about the religion to which he belonged. After Nagasena had solved a number of dilemmas and knotty problems put by the King, Menander (Milinda) became a devotee of the Buddha. The record of the dialogue between the King and Nagasena has been preserved for us in the form of Milinda-panha, a Pali work. It is divided into seven parts and covers almost all aspects of Buddhism.

After conversion to Buddhism, Milinda became an ardent champion of the Buddhist cause. He built a monastery named Milinda-Vihara at Sialkot for the residence of Venerable Nagasena and his colleagues. He also made substantial donations to the Sangha in other places. According to the Shinkot inscription,[28] Milinda 'helped in the propagation of Buddhism.' From Shinkot in Bajaur (the frontier province of Gandhara in those days) a relic-casket[29] has also been discovered. This casket has an inscription in Kharoshthi by the dedicator, an Indian Buddhist named Vijayamitra, who lived during the reign of Milinda. That Milinda was a devout Buddhist is further

proved by some of his coins which bear the Wheel[30] of the Law (Dharma-Chakra), a Buddhist symbol. Milinda also styled himself as 'dhammaka'[31] as well as 'dikaios' on his coins; both the Pali and the Greek word mean 'just'. According to Plutarch, the Greek historian, Menander 'had keen sense of justice and was dearly loved by his people'.

Kanishka

In about 80 BC, Sakas appeared on the scene of India. The first Saka chief to invade and conquer a large part of Punjab and Gandhara was Maues or Mauakas. Maues, who later embraced Buddhism, was the first King in India to issue coins with the Buddha figure.[32] Maues died in 58 BC and was succeeded by Azes I. Thereafter, the notable Saka Satraps were Hagamasha, Hagana and Rajuvala or Rajula.

The Sakas were followed by the Kushanas. The Kushanas belonged to the Yueh-Chi tribe who originally lived in north-west China. In about 125 BC they went to Bactria and settled there and in due course they gave up their nomadic habits of life. The tribe was divided into five groups. In about 40 AD, Kajula Kadphises, the chief of one of the five groups, defeated the other four and thus laid the foundation of a united kingdom of the Yueh-Chi tribe as a whole. Soon thereafter, he attacked the Indo-Parthians and captured southern Afghanistan and Gandhara from them, and thus extended his domain as far as Taxila. While in Gandhara, the first Kushana King, Kajula Kadphises or Kadphises I was attracted by Buddhism. It is evident from his coins discovered at Taxila that Kadphises I was a devout Buddhist. Apart from the Buddha figure, his coins bear the inscription in Kharoshthi script[33] 'Dhamma-Thidasa' or 'Sacca-Thidasa' which means who is steadfast in Dhamma or True Dhamma. Kajula Kadphises was succeeded by his son, Vima Kadphises. Kadphises II extended his hold over the Punjab and a part of the present day Uttar Pradesh. He ruled this vast empire from Taxila for about 14 years (64-78 AD). He was succeeded by Kanishka, the greatest of the Kushana rulers.

Kanishka was a great conqueror. Soon after ascending the throne, Kanishka captured Kashmir. He further extended

his kingdom upto Bihar (Patna) in the east and upto Konkan in the west. Kanishka also led a successful campaign against the Chinese across the Pamirs and annexed Kashgar, Yarkand and Khotan to his empire. The capital of Kanishka's vast empire was Purushapura (modern Peshawar), a strategic town controlling the main route from Afghanistan to the Indus plains in matters of trade as well as warfare. Thus Kanishka was the master of the great cross roads of the active civilizations of his time.

Kanishka was not a new convert, but had inherited the Buddhist faith from his fore-fathers. However, he is said to have come firmly to Buddhism after witnessing bloodshed during his conquests. In the first century AC Buddhism in India was passing through a change. The literary activities of the distinguished Buddhist savants of the time were transforming it into Mahayana. Kanishka was attracted by the new form of Buddhism in the making. On the advice of Parsva, a great Buddhist theologian, who flourished at his court, Kanishka convened a Buddhist Council in order to reconcile the varying teachings of the different sects. This Council, known as Fourth Council, was presided over by Vasumitra. Five hundred Buddhist elders, majority of them being the Sarvastivadins, took part in the proceedings of the convocation, rehearsed the doctrines of Buddhism and prepared explanatory commentaries on them. The commentaries known as the Vibhasa Sastras covered all the three Pitakas (Baskets) of the Buddhist Canon. According to Hiuen Tsang,[34] the Council composed 100,000 stanzas of Upadesasatras explaining the canonical sutras, 100,000 stanzas of the Vinaya-vibhasa-sastras explaining the Vinaya, and 100,000 stanzas of the Abhidharma-vibhasa-sastras explaining the Abhidharma. These were engraved on copper plates and were deposited in a stupa specially built for the purpose. These copper plates have not been discovered so far. However, the Mahavibhasa, which is still preserved in Chinese, perhaps represents the commentaries compiled by the fourth Buddhist Council.

The Council convened by Kanishka, according to one tradition, was held in Kashmir, while according to another tradition, it was held at Jalandhar in Punjab. The District Gazetteer[35] states as follows: "The earliest historical mention of Jullundur occurs in the reign of Kanishka, the Kushana, who ruled from Kabul to the present U.P. There met, at his instigation at Kuvana, near Jullundur

about 100 AD a Council of Buddhist teachers, which set itself the task of collecting and arranging the sacred writings of Buddhism. 'Hiuen Tsang, who recorded in the seventh century AD the traditional account of Buddhism in India, states that it was held in Kashmir. But the claim of Jalandhar as its venue seems to be well-founded. The account of this Council is found in many works composed much earlier than the visit of the Chinese pilgrim. On that basis, eminent scholars like Dr. Radhakrishnan,[36] Grunwedel[37] and Wadell[38] have accepted Jalandhar as the venue of this Council. The scholars who maintain that it was held in Kashmir say that Jalandhar was first contemplated by Kanishka but was later on rejected on account of heat and damping atmosphere. This is not a very valid reason for changing the venue as it could have been held during winter months. If at all the venue was changed later, it was probably shifted to Tamsavana monastery, where, according to Nundo Lal Dey,[39] the fourth Buddhist Synod was held. The Tamsavana convent was at modern Sultanpur or Raghunathpur at the confluence of river Bias and Serheri. It is just about 25 miles north-east from Jalandhar city. The famous scholar Katyayana,[40] whose Abhidharmajnanaprasthana Sastra was discussed by the fourth Council, belonged to this monastery.

Kanishka was a great patron of learning. By the first century AD, Pali, the language of the Buddhist scriptures, had given way to Sanskrit and there were a number of distinguished Sanskrit scholars at the court of Kanishka. Asvaghosha, the most eminent author of Sanskrit kavyas in the post-vedic period before Kalidasa enjoyed the patronage of Kanishka. Parsva and Vasumitra were two other great Buddhist scholars in the court of Kanishka. It was at the suggestion of Parsva, one of the great theologians of the time, that Kanishka had convened the Fourth Buddhist Council. Vasumitra, who presided over the Council, also wrote a treatise on the eighteen schools of Buddhism. According to Taranatha, Dharmtrata, the author of Udanavarga, a Sanskrit version of the Pali Dhammapada, also flourished in Kanishka's court.

Besides the religious teachers, there were some great scholars in secular sciences also at the court of Kanishka. Mathara, a political thinker of extraordinary brilliance, was a Minister of Kanishka. Charaka, the king's physician, was one of the famous medical men of ancient times. He was the author of the famous Charakasamhita, of

which an edition revised by Dridhabala has come down to us. This work enjoyed great popularity and was translated into Persian and Arabic languages.

Like Asoka, Kanishka too undertook the propagation of Buddhism in India and abroad with the zeal and zest of a missionary. Due to his initiative, guidance and patronage, not only Buddhism became popular and deep rooted in the land of its birth but it was also successfully introduced into Central Asia and China. In other words, he completed Asoka's work and helped in the triumphant spread of the Buddha-Dhamma throughout Asia.

Kanishka liberally patronised art and architecture. Like Asoka, he was a great builder and founded many monasteries, chaityas and stupas. Though the monuments created by Kanishka were scattered throughout his kingdom, the main stupas and viharas were at his capital, Peshawar, at Taxila and in Kashmir. According to Kalhana's Rajatarangini, Kanishka founded a city named Kanishkapura which has been identified with the modern Kansipur in Kashmir. Kanishka is also said to have renewed Asoka's gift of all Kashmir to the Buddhist Sangha. At Peshawar, Kanishka, erected a great tope (stupa) which was named after him. To the west of the tope, he built a large monastery which was known as Kanishka Mahavihara.

The Great Tope (Stupa) at Peshawar erected by Kanishka was visited by Fa-hian, the first Chinese pilgrim, in the beginning of the fifth century AD. He says,[41] "of all the pagodas and temples seen by the pilgrim not one could compare with this in grandeur and dignity and tradition says that of the various pagodas in the inhabited worlds this one takes the highest rank." Hiuen Tsang, the second Chinese pilgrim, visited Peshawar in AD 630. According to him,[42] the Kanishka stupa was 400 feet in height; the base being in five stages and 150 feet high. The ruins of this stupa have been identified with the ruins known as 'Shah-ji-ki-Dheri' near Ganj Gate on the south-eastern outskirts of modern Peshawar. The site was excavated in 1908-1909 and one of the important discoveries was the famous 'Kanishka Casket'. The casket which contained the holy relics of the Buddha was deposited by Kanishka himself. The reliquary has on its lid "a seated Buddha flanked by two Bodhisattvas. In relief round the upper part of the cylinder is a frieze of flying geese; below is the main frieze with a figure

of King Kanishka standing in front of an undulating garland supported by erotes and framing demi-figures of votaries. On the lid and sides is a punctured inscription in Kharoshthi which twice mentions the name of Kanishka and concludes with the name of the master-mason: The servant Agisala, the overseer of works at Kanishka's vihara in the sangharama of Mahasena."[43]

With the emergence of Mahayana, the image of the Buddha came into vogue. Two important schools of Buddhist art and sculpture that came into being were the Gandhara and the Mathura schools. The Gandhara art "was a composite art developed as a result of contact with foreign races like the Greeks, the Sakas, the Pahlavas and the Kushanas". The Gandhara art pieces have been found at Taxila, the area around Peshawar and Afghanistan; the best among them being from Jaulian and Dharmarajika Stupa at Taxila and from Hadda near Jalalabad. The Mathura art was purely indigenous art. The first purely Indian images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas were made at Mathura during Kanishka's reign.

Kanishka ruled from 78-101 AD Kanishka started a new era. It began when he ascended the throne in 78 AD. It came to be known as the "Saka Era", apparently because the era was in use for a long time among the Saka Satraps of western India. Modern India has immortalised Kanishka by adopting the "Saka Era" as the "National Era".

Important Kushana Kings after Kanishka were: Vasishka or Kanishka II, Huvishka and Vasudeva. During their reign also the religion of the Buddha continued to flourish. Huvishka, the second successor of Kanishka, built a monastery and a Buddhist temple in Mathura. The great Maha Bodhi Temple, which is standing even to-day, was built in the second century AD with the liberal donations from Huvishka. The Kushana rule in India declined towards the end of second century AD.

Harsha

The opening years of the sixth century AD saw the disintegration of the Gupta Empire. Taking advantage of the slackening grip of the latter Gupta Kings, some of the local chieftains carved out independent kingdoms. Two of such powers were the Maukharies of Kanauj and

the Vardhana dynasty of Thanesar. Kanauj or Kanyakubja (city of dwarfs) is in the Farrukhabad district of Uttar Pradesh. Thanesar is now a Tehsil headquarters in Karnal district of Haryana.

The first powerful ruler of the Vardhana dynasty of Thanesar was Prabhakaravardhana (583-605 AD) who, to begin with, was a petty chief of Sthanesvara (Thanesar) but became a powerful king by subduing the adjoining territories. Bana describes Prabhakaravardhana "as a lion to the Huna deer, a burning fever to the king of the Indus land, a troubler of the sleep of Gurjara king, a billious plague to that scent-elephant, the lord of Gandhara, a looter to the lawlessness of the Latas, and an axe to the creeper of Malwa's glory.' As a result of his conquests in the four directions, Prabhakaravardhana assumed the title of 'Maharajadhiraja' whereas his father Adityavardhana and grandfather Rajyavardhana I were simply called 'Maharajas'. Prabhakaravardhana had two sons, Rajyavardhana and Harshavardhana, and a daughter, Rajyasri. In the Madhuban inscription, Rajyavardhana is described as a 'most devout worshipper of Sugata[44] (Buddha). Similar is true of both Harsha and Rajyasri as well.

Harsha had to assume power of the Thanesar and the Kanauj kingdoms under dramatic and tragic circumstances. While Rajyavardhana, his elder brother, was fighting in the battlefield against the North-West Huns, the King passed away. Though Rajyavardhana was victorious, he returned home dejected due to the injuries and arrow wounds he had received in the battlefield and disappointed due to the sudden demise of his father. Harsha and his elder brother were still mourning the death of their beloved father when suddenly a courier named Samvadaka gave the tragic news of the assassination of their brother-in-law, Grahavarman, and the imprisonment of their sister, Rajyasri, at the hands of the Hindu king of Malwa. On hearing this sad news Rajyavardhana, though dejected, depressed and still in bandages, consoled his younger brother like a courageous man and rushed with his army to rescue Rajyasri. Harsha remained behind to guard against any fresh Huna invasion. Rajyavardhana was able to defeat the King of Malwa but he fell into a trap of Sasanka, Brahmin king of Gauda (Bengal), ally of the Malwa King. The mischevious Sasanka offered Rajyavardhana the hand of his daughter as a token of submission

and friendship, and called him to a meeting. When Rajyavardhana came to the meeting he was treacherously assassinated by the Gauda King.

Thus, almost in quick succession, Harsha, who was barely 16 at that time, lost his father, his brother-in-law and his brother. Not only that, the honour of his sister was also in peril. The young Buddhist Prince, therefore, flared up and took a vow to punish the murderers of his brother and brother-in-law. So he rushed immediately with his army to Kanauj. On the way, he receivec some precious presents from Hamsavega, on behalf of Bhaskaravarman, king of Kamarupa (Assam) as a toker of friendly alliance. Harsha gladly accepted this timely help and marched ahead. After going a little further, Harsha got the news that Rajyasri had been released and had taken refuge in the Vindhya forest. He, therefore, changed his plans and turned to the Vindhya forest in search of Rajyasri. There he met the Buddhist sage Divakaramitra, an old friend of the deceased Grahavarman. With his help, Harsha was able to trace Rajyasri when she was just going to end her life by mounting the funeral pyre. After rescuing Rajyasri, Harsha turned towards Kanauj. On reaching Kanauj, he found that Sasanka had in fear beat a retreat and the Malwa King had no courage to try strength. Thus Harsha was able to take Kanauj with ease.

Since there was no heir-apparent to the Kanauj throne, Rajyasri, who had taken a vow to lead the life of a Buddhist nun, suggested and with the consent of the 'nobles of Maukhari court' Harsha was offered the crown. Thus Harsha became head of both the Thanesar and Kanauj royal houses.

After uniting the two kingdoms, Harsha, as says Hiuen Tsang, commanded his ministers, saying[45] 'The enemies of my brother are unpunished as yet, the neighbouring countries not brought to submission; while this is so, my right hand shall never lift food to my mouth. Therefore do you, people and officers unite with one heart and put out your strength'. Accordingly, they assembled all the soldiers of the kingdom, summoned the masters of arms. They had a body of 5,000 elephants, a body of 20,000 cavalry, and 50,000 foot-soldiers. He went from east to west subduing all who were not obedient. After six years he had subdued the Five Indies'. Thus Harsha extended his hold over a vast territory including Punjab,

Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal and Orissa. This laid once again the foundation of Central power in North India. No wonder, Harsha was known as the Lord Paramount of North India (Sakalotharaoathanatha). Later, Harsha transferred his capital from Thanesar to Kanauj for administrative and political reasons.

Apart from being a great conqueror, Harsha was an efficient and competent ruler. He was a man of extraordinary energy and was the motive force behind the whole administrative machinery. Harsha toured from province to province to see that his officers were implementing his policies properly. Inefficient and corrupt officers were punished, whereas honest and efficient ones were rewarded.

Hiuen Tsang speaks highly about the mildness, justness, efficiency and benevolent spirit of Harsha's administration. He says,[46] "As the administration of the government is founded on benign principles, the executive is simple. The families are not entered on registers, and the people are not subjected to forced labour. The taxes on the people are light, and the personal service required of them is moderate. Each one keeps his own worldly goods in peace, and all till the ground for their subsistence. Those who cultivate the royal estates pay a sixth part of the produce as tribute. The merchants who engage in commerce come and go in carrying out their transactions. The river-passages and the road-barriers are open on payment of a small toll".

Like Asoka, Harsha devoted himself and directed all his power and pelf for the welfare of his people. He built Dharmasalas wherein arrangements were made to provide food, drinking water and medicines for the benefit of the poor and the sick. Hiuen Tsang[47] says that Harsha "practised to the utmost the rules of temperance, sought to plant the tree of religious merit to such an extent that he forgot to sleep or eat. He forbade the slaughter of any living thing or flesh as food throughout the Five Indies on pain of death without pardon. He built on the banks of the river Ganges several thousand stupas; in the highways of the towns and the villages throughout India he erected hospices, provided with medicines for travellers and poor persons, to be given without any stint". In other words, Harsha devoted himself to the tasks of peace, the promotion of the material and moral interests of the country, and to bring out her cultural individuality

19-7-1994

and greatness.

Harsha was also an author of distinction. He wrote three Sanskrit dramas, Nagananda, Ratnavali and Priyadarsika. The writings of Harsha clearly indicate devotion to Buddhism and his zeal to make it popular with the masses. His play Nagananda deals with the legend of Jimutavahana (cloud-riding) Bodhisattava who sacrificed himself for a naga. The famous poet of those days Bana was Harsha's poet laureate and his famous biography-Harsacharita is an important historical document about the fourth powerful Buddhist monarch. Bana's another creation of merit is Kadambari.

Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim, who was in India from 631 AD to 643 AD, was a very learned scholar of Buddhism and was well versed in the Dhamma. Due to his influence, Harsha's bonds with Buddhism were further strengthened. Harsha treated the illustrious pilgrim with utmost reverence and hospitality. To honour the distinguished guest, Harsha convoked a grand assembly at Kanauj which was attended by three thousand Buddhist monks, and one thousand scholars from Nalanda. Bhaskaravarman, the king of Assam, friend and an important ally of Harsha as well as several other rulers were also present. The conference lasted for 21 days. Giving an eye-witness account of the function, Hiuen Tsang says,[48] 'The king in advance had constructed on the west side of the river a great sangharama, and on the east a precious tower about 100 feet in height; in the middle he had placed a golden statue of Buddha, of the same height as the king himself. On the south of the tower he placed a precious altar, in the place for washing the image of Buddha. It was now the second month of spring-time; from the first day of the month he had presented exquisite food to the Sramanas and Brahmanas till the 21st day; all along, from the temporary palace to the sangharama, there were highly decorated pavilions, and places where musicians were stationed, who raised the sounds of their instruments. The king, on leaving the resting-hall (palace of travel), made them bring forth on gorgeously caparisoned great elephant a golden statute of Buddha about three feet high, and raised aloft. On the left went the king, Siladitya, dressed as Sakra, holding a precious canopy, whilst Kumara-raja, dressed as Brahma-raja, holding a white chamara, went on the right. Each of them had as an escort 500 war elephants clad in armour; in front

and behind the statute of Buddha went 100 great elephants, carrying musicians, who sounded their drums and raised their music. The king, Siladitya, as he went, scattered on every side pearls and various precious substances, with gold and silver flowers, in honour of the precious objects of worship. Having first washed the image in scented water at the altar, the king then himself bore it on his shoulder to the western tower, where he offered to it tens, hundreds, and thousands of silken garments, decorated with precious gems. At this time there were but about twenty Sramanas following in the procession, the kings of the various countries forming the escort. After the feast they assembled the different men of learning, who discussed in elegant language the most abtruse subjects".

It seems that non-Buddhists, especially Brahmins, were not happy about the way Harsha honoured Hiuen Tsang and showed his respect and reverence to Lord Buddha. So they conspired and tried their utmost to make the celebrations a failure. Firstly, they put on fire the tower and the pavilion over the gate of the hall erected at an immense cost. There was some damage but it is said that fire was immediately extinguished and the smoke disappeared almost miraculously as a result of the prayers of the King and his guest. When the trouble makers failed in their attempt to disrupt the assembly they thought of another conspiracy and hired a lunatic heretic to kill Harsha. So when after inspecting the damaged tower Harsha was coming down the steps a fanatic heretic suddenly tried to stab the King with the knife. The attempt, was, however, foiled by the alertness of the King who promptly seized the knife from the hired culprit. After interrogation of this heretic, a conspiracy was unearthed and five hundred Brahmins were immediately arrested by Harsha. They admitted jealousy against Buddhism and their plans to get rid of Harsha by under hand means.

After the Kanauj assembly, Harsha took Hiuen Tsang to Prayag (Allahabad) where he was holding his six quinquennial assembly. Harsha had been holding this mass distribution assembly for the past thirty years. This assembly was a display of charity and was called Maha Mokşha Parishad. It commenced with the worship of Lord Buddha and lasted for seventy-five days. This ceremony was attended by all the vassal kings and was really a grand

show. It is said that there were about 5 lakhs sramanas, heretics, nigranthas, brahmins and the poor and Harsha gave away all he possessed. The biography[49] of Hiuen Tsang tells us that "The first day saw the distribution of costly clothing and articles in worship of the Buddha; the next two days were given to the worship of the Sun and Siva and charities halved in value as compared to the first day. On the fourth day 10,000 selected Buddhists were each given 100 pieces of gold, one pearl, one cotton garment, besides a variety of food and drink, flowers and perfumes. The next twenty days were occupied by gifts to the Brahmans, another ten days by gifts to the heretics, and another ten days to the seekers of alms from distant countries. The eighth distribution of charity was to the poor, the destitute and orphans, taking a whole month". Thus Harsha's was a record in individual charity and liberality.

Under Harsha's patronage, Buddhism saw great resurgence and grew in strength especially in Kanauj and other important centres in his Kingdom. Fa-hian, who came early in the fifth century, saw in Kanauj only two monasteries but Hiuen Tsang mentions as many as hundred monasteries with more than 10,000 Bhikkhus. According to him, Harsha used to earmark a fourth of the revenues of the State for gifts to various sects. Buddhism naturally claimed the largest share of this gift money. Nalanda, the most important centre of Buddhist culture and learning received Harsha's due attention. In this university Harsha constructed a magnificent Vihara and remitted the revenues of about 100 villages for meeting its running expenses. He also built stupas and monasteries at the holy places of Buddhism. He also held annually a convocation of the Buddhists, where discussions were held and views exchanged among the learned Buddhist monks.

Harsha ruled for over forty years from 606-647 AD and during this period Buddhism reached the zenith of glory. The flourishing condition of Buddhism in his empire is well illustrated by the data collected by Hiuen Tsang. According to him, there were about over 100,000 Buddhist monks within Harsha's empire. Hiuen Tsang also tells us that India during Harsha's reign was extremely prosperous. Trade was brisk and people lived well. He adds that "the government is honestly administered, the criminal class is small, the people live together on good terms, are of pure moral principles, do not practice deceit,

keep their obligations, and do not take anything wrongfully". To quote the words of C.V. Vaidya, "The reign of Harsha was a brilliant ending to the period that was passing; like a flame that bursts into brilliance before it expires, the condition of the country in the days of Harsha was flattering in every respect."

OTHER KINGS

Andhra Pradesh

After the decline of the Mauryan Empire, the Satavahanas carved out a principality for themselves in the Andhra-desa and Maharashtra. This dynasty ruled up to 218 AD, i.e. for a long period of over 450 years. Though the Satavahana monarchs were not Buddhists but many of them like Gautamiputra Satakarni, Vasistputra Pulumavi and Yajnasri Sata-Karni were sympathetic towards the Buddhist cause. Most of the Buddhist monuments of Andhra were constructed during the Satavahana period. During the reign of the later Satavahana Kings, who made the nearby Dhanyakataka their royal seat, the Amaravati Stupa (maha-chaitya) was enlarged and surrounded by a new highly ornamental railing carved with beautiful reliefs and elegent designs.

Yajnasri Satakarni (166-196 AD), the last important King of the Satavahana dynasty, was the patron and friend of the famous Buddhist saint and scholar, Nagarjuna, the founder of the Madhyamika school of the Buddhist philosophy. He is said to have built a monastery for Nagarjuna at Sri-parvata, where the Acharya lived towards the evening of his life. When after the decline of the Satavahanas, the Ikshvaku Kings came to power around 225 AD, Sri-parvata or Nagarjunakonda became an active centre of Buddhism. Chamtasri, sister of the founder of this royal house, Vasisthputra Chamtamula, was an ardent devotee of the Buddha. This pious lady and other Ikshvaku Princesses were therefore the main benefactors of the Buddhist shrines in and around Vijayapuri, the Ikshvaku capital. The second Ikshvaku King, Sri Virapurushadatta, is said to have embraced Buddhism. His son and successor, Ehuvala or Chamtamula II was also a Buddhist. Like his father, he ruled for 24 years. His reign marked the golden period of Nagarjunakonda as

it was during this period that construction of Buddhist shrines reached its peak. In all, more than thirty shrines came up in the Nagarjunakonda Valley during the Ikshvaku rule. Thus it was the largest and most important Buddhist settlement in South India in the third century AD.

The Bodhi dynasty which ruled over some parts of Deccan in the third century AD was another royal Buddhist family. They derived their surname from the Bodhi Tree and the names of the kings as recorded in the coins are, Sribodhi, Sivabodhi, Chandrabodhi and Virabodhi.

About the middle of the fourth century there flourished in Andhra, Damodra Verma, a king of the Andhra dynasty. He too was a Buddhist and built many buildings for the use of the Sangha. One of the chaityas constructed by him has been identified by the scholars with the Kapalisvara temple at Chezarla to which usage it seems to have been converted by the Hindus when Buddhism fell from its place of privilege.

Bihar

In ancient days, Bihar was known as Magadha. Towards the later half of the third century A.D. Bihar saw the advent of the Gupta Empire which like the Mauryan Empire played an important role in the political, religious and social life of India. Although the early Gupta Emperors were not Buddhists but they were sympathetic towards the cause of Buddhism and even patronised it to some extent for cultural reasons. The great Samudragupta gave permission and a piece of land to the Ceylonese King, Srimeghavana (362 AD. to 389 AD) to build a rest house and monastery at Bodh Gaya for the Sinhalese pilgrims. His successor Chandragupta II had as his chief adviser the famous Buddhist philosopher Vasubandhu. Thus towards the end of the fifth century AD the Gupta family had completely come under the influence of Buddhism. Its last two important Kings, Buddhagupta and his brother Baladitya, were Buddhists. Baladitya, his former name being Narasimhagupta, ascended the throne in about 500 AD after the death of his brother Buddhagupta. Baladitya was a great patron of Buddhism and he built a Sangharama (Sanctuary) at Nalanda. He also constructed a temple with Buddha image, the pinnacle (Sikhara) of which was very high. In his later life Baladitya became a Bhikshu, stayed at Nalanda and died at Nalanda.

Bihar is the 'Land of Enlightenment' as it was at Bodh Gaya that Siddhartha attained supreme enlightenment sitting under a Pipal Tree, better known as the Bodhi Tree. In about AD 600, the sacred Bodhi Tree was cut down and burnt by Sasanka, a Brahmin King of Bengal. Twenty years later, in AD 620, a devout local Buddhist King, Raja Purnavarma, restored the Bodhi Tree and surrounded it by a wall, 24 feet high, to prevent it from being cut down again. This wall was seen by Hiuen Tsang in AD 637.

Gujarat

Rudra Sena I, who was a Saka Satrap, ruled over Malwa, Gujarat, Kathiawar, Konkan and Rajputana from 200 AD to 222 AD. He was succeeded by his two brothers Sangha-Daman and D(h)ama-Sena (both Buddhist names) who ruled from 222-238 AD. Their lineage was continued by Yaso Daman, Vijaya Sena, D(h)amajada and Rudra Sena II who ruled from 238-279 AD. The members of this royal house were Buddhists.

In the sixth century AD the Samanta rulers of Valabhi came to power in this region after the decline of the Gupta Empire. They were great patrons of Buddhism. Their capital, Valabhi, had the second largest Buddhist University at that time. Valabhi had as many as thirteen monasteries. Two royal ladies, Dudda and Memma were devout Buddhist nuns who established with the patronage of the kings their own monasteries. According to Hiuen Tsang, who visited Valabhi in the seventh century AD, there were 100 monasteries and 6000 Buddhist monks at Valabhi.

Kashmir

Asoka is said to have built 500 monasteries in Kashmir and later given the Valley itself as a gift to the Buddhist Sangha. Like Asoka, Kanishka too is said to have made gift of Kashmir to the Sangha. Thus Kashmir was a stronghold of Buddhism for many centuries. The Buddhists were, however, mercilessly persecuted by Mihirkula, a Huna, who came to power in AD 515. On Mihirkula's death, Kashmir was fortunate to have a staunch local Buddhist as its ruler. He was Meghavahana. He undertook the propagation of Buddhism with great zeal and built many viharas. His wives too vied with each other in erecting

viharas. Famous among these was Amritabhavana, which was got built by the queen Amritaprabha. As the queen was a Ladakhi lady and her guru was also from Ladakh, she dedicated this vihara to Amitayu, the river of long life. This place is now known as Antbhavan and lies in the vicinity of Vicharnag, Srinagar. Though the rulers following Meghavahva were not Buddhists but Buddhist sacred buildings continued to be put up in their time. In the time of Pravarsena II who ruled towards the later part of the sixth century AD a big Vihara was constructed in Srinagar by the king's maternal uncle, Jayendra. It was called Jayendravihara and Hiuen Tsang stayed there when he visited Kashmir. Similarly Skanda, founded an imposing Vihara called Skandabhavanvihara which has left its name Skandabhavan to a locality in Srinagar. Lalitaditya, a great indigenous ruler of Kashmir though not a Buddhist, had keen interest in Buddhism. He built a huge Vihara--the Rajavihara- in Parihasapora. Its ruins have been excavated at Paraspore. Chankuna, the Chief Minister of Lalitaditya was a Buddhist and he too constructed a Vihara named after him as Chankuna-Vihara.

Kerala

The first Buddhist ruler of Kerala was Jayasimha Perumal, who ruled over Travancore in the first century BC. Another Buddhist King of Kerala was Bana Perumal who flourished in the third century AD. He was popularly known as Baudha Perumal. The third important Buddhist ruler of Kerala was King Vikramaditya Varagunan. His capital was Srimulavasam near modern Alwaye in the Travancore State. The rulers of Srimulavasam were known as Moosbaka Kings. An ancient Sanskrit work called Mooshakavamsam gives a vivid description of the city and the rulers of Srimulavasam. According to this work, there were many Buddhist shrines and monasteries in this city. King Varagunan propagated Buddhism not only in South India but also in other parts of India.

The epic Manimekalai a Tamil Classic had its birth at Vanji (Srivanjikalam) or Cranganore, the capital of the Chera Kings. It was in this city that Manimekalai met Aravana Adigal and took refuge in the Sangha, the Order of Buddhist Nuns. The Chera Kings were great patrons of Buddhism and enforced the Buddhist Law

This may be the reason why ancient Cheradasa was known as Dharmarajyam, or the land of Dharma. The Chera capital Vanji had been associated with notable Buddhist missionaries.

Maharashtra

When the Mauryan Empire declined, the Satavahana dynasty came to power in Maharashtra. It was founded by Simukha who ruled from BC 230- BC 212. Simukha was succeeded by his brother Krishna. Satakarni I, the son of Simukha was the third ruler (BC 202-BC 192). The Satavahanas ruled for about 450 years except a brief interlude when they were ousted by the Saka Satrap, Nahapana. Gautamiputra Satakarni, the twenty-third king, was the greatest Satavahana king during whose reign the empire reached its climax. He ruled for 24 years from AD 106-130. His inscriptions as well as of his mother Gautami Balasri have been found in the Buddhist caves at Nasik. The last great king of the Satavahana dynasty was Yajnasri Satakarni (AD 166-196).

It was during the long Satavahana rule that Maharashtra saw one of the greatest efflorescence of art and culture. Most of the Buddhist caves in Maharashtra were excavated during this period (BC 200-AD 200). The Saka Satraps also patronised Buddhism. A number of inscriptions in cave VIII at Nasik of Usavadata, son of Dinika and son-in-law of Nahapana, who became governor of Nasik in the first century AD, tell us about the excavation of new caves as well as gifts made by him and his family to the Bhikkhu Sangha.

The second phase of excavation of Buddhist caves in Maharashtra began in the fifth century AD with the Mahayana resurgence and continued up to the seventh century. The caves of Ajanta and Ellora were executed in this period during the reign of the Vakataka Kings. Some ministers of this royal house were Buddhists. An inscription in cave No. XVI at Ajanta records the dedication of a cave by Varahadeva, a minister of the last Vakataka King, Harisena (circa AD 475-500). Another inscription in cave XVII at Ajanta records the gifts of Hastibhoja, a minister of the last Vakataka King, Devasena.

Punjab

Ancient Punjab was a composite State comprising

of the present States* of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh as well as West Punjab which now forms part of Pakistan.

The Dhamma- Vijaya Campaign of Asoka created a stir in the Land of the Five Rivers which resulted in the advent of a local Buddhist Kingdom with Sugh, near Jagadhri in the district of Ambala, as its capital city, and covering an area of about 1000 miles in circuit. Raja Dhanabhuti, the pre-eminent king of this royal family ruled from 240 BC to 210 BC. This pious Buddhist king, apart from building magnificent stupas in his capital city, also made munificent donations to the world famous Stupa at Bharhut in Central India which was constructed sometime between 250 BC and 200 BC. According to Cunningham, the inscription on the East Gateway reads as follow, after restoration:

> " This ornamental gateway has been erected by the king of Srughna, Dhanabhuti, born of (the queen of) of the Vatsa family, (and) son of Agaraja, born of (the queen) of the Gota family, (and) grandson of king (Visa Deva), born of (the queen of) the Gageya race, and spiritual merit has been gained (thereby)."

Inspired by Asoka, Raja Dhanabhuti also raised a number of stupas in and around his capital. Hiuen Tsang, who visited Sugh in 635 AD saw there, besides an Asokan stupa, a number of stupas having body-relics of the Buddha, Sariputta and Moggallana. His two chief disciples, and other Arhats. The ruins of one of these stupas have since been discovered at Chaneti, a small village situated about 3 km east of Jagadhari, and nearly the same distance north-west of Sugh.

Raja Dhanabhuti was succeeded by his son, Vadha Pala in 210 BC, and he in turn was succeeded by his son, Dhanabhuti II, in about 180 BC. That this royal family continued to donate liberally to the Buddhist shrines outside Punjab is evident from the two other inscriptions found at Bharhut and Mathura. According to the 2nd Bharhut inscription-- the Railings of that Stupa were the gift of Raja Dhanabhuti's son, Prince Vadha Pala.

* Please see 'Buddhism in the Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, D.C. Ahir, 1971.

It says: "Dhanabhuti rajano putasa Kumarasa Vadha Palasa (danam)". According to the Mathura inscription, "the gift of Dhanabhuti II at Mathura included a Vedika or open building for reading, a Torana or ornamental gateway, and a Ratnagriha or treasury".

After the disappearance of the Greek rule in about 100 BC, Punjab was divided into small independent principalities or kingdoms of the local peoples. Important amongst them were: the Audumbaras, Trigartas, Kunindas, Yaudheyas and Arjunayanas. The Audumbaras ruled the country on the Upper Beas between Gurdaspur and Hoshiarpur districts with their capital perhaps near about Pathankot. The Trigartas ruled the areas between the Sutlej (Ludhiana) and the Yamuna (Saharanpur) with their capital at Sugh near Ambala. The Yaudheyas ruled the territory southward of the Kunindas with perhaps Sonepat as centre.

Though we do not know much about others but it can be said with some certainty that the Audumbaras and Kunindas were Buddhists. The Audumbaras find mention in the Buddhist Texts. In the Tibetan version of the Vinaya of the Mula Sarvastivadins, the capital of the Audumbaras is noted as the citadel of Buddhism in the north-western region. According to Przyluski, the Audumbaras had 'attained a sufficiently high degree of culture and material prosperity before the beginning of the Christian era and were among the champions of Buddhism in the eastern region'. Some of the coins of the Audumbaras, which have been unearthed at Rupar, have the Buddhist stupa embossed over them.

The Kunindas have been indentified by Cunningham with the royal family of Srughna (Sugh) by the line of Raja Dhanabhuti noticed by us earlier. His view is based on the coins of the King Amoga-bhuti, who calls himself as 'King of the Kunindas', which have been found in abundance around Sugh, particularly along the Upper Jamuna. The identification of the Kunindas is further supported by the discovery of the coins at Sugh of Aga-Raja, father of Raja Dhanabhuti I, and Raja Bala-bhuti who was most probably a later member of the same dynasty. The Kunindas have since been identified with the Kanets of the high hills of Himachal Pradesh, where, it is said, they were driven up by the advancing wave of immigration. It is significant that a good number of Kanets in the districts of Kinnaur, Kangra (Kulu) and Lahaul even to-day profess Buddhism.

At the time of the visit of Hiuen Tsang, the kingdom of Jalandhara was ruled by a Buddhist king named Wuddhi or Udito. Apart from the modern district of Jalandhar, this kingdom included the districts of Hoshiarpur and Kangra as well as Chamba, Mandi and Suket. Hiuen Tsang visited the city of Jalandhar in AD 635 and stayed for four months at the Nagardhana monastery. According to him, the kingdom of Jalandhara had about fifty monasteries and 2000 monks. King Udito was an ally of Harsha. When on his way back Hiuen Tsang passed through Jalandhar in AD 643, King Udito made arrangements to conduct the pilgrim in safety to the frontiers.

Tamil Nadu

Kanchipuram was the most important Buddhist centre in ancient Tamil Nadu. Skanda-Varman of the Pallava dynasty of Kanchi who flourished towards the close of the third century AD was an admirer and probably a devotee of the Buddha. He had a son, Buddha Varman, who is mentioned as Yuvraja in the grant issued by his queen, Charudevi. His other son was Buddhyankara. As a result of royal patronage many monasteries came up at Kanchipuram which soon developed into seats of learning and attracted Buddhist scholars from other parts of the country. One of the most important Tamil Buddhist monks was Bodhidharma, a prince of Kanchi, who went to China in AD 526 and founded the Dhyana school, called Ch'an in China, and Zen in Japan.

West Bengal

The first Buddhist dynasty to rule Independent Bengal was the Khadga dynasty of Samtata. The Khadgas ruled from 625 to 725 AD. Buddhism during this period especially during the reign of Rajabhata made an impressive progress. Rajabhata was an ardent Buddhist and used to commence his daily business of the State only after receiving the blessings of the Venerable Bhikhshus. During his time there were 4000 monks in 30 monasteries in Samtata alone. There was a monastic University at Tamralipti with 1000 monks.

SAINTS AND SCHOLARS

PALI SCHOLARS

Moggaliputta Tissa

Moggaliputta Tissa was the most eminent Buddhist saint, seer and scholar who lived in the third century BC. He was not only the preceptor of Asoka but he also guided the first Buddhist Emperor in all religious matters and Dhamma propagation.

According to Mahavamsa, he was the son of Mogalli of Pataliputra. He was converted to Buddhism by Siggava. It so happened that one day, young Tissa who was thoroughly proficient in the Vedas, was much annoyed when he saw Siggava, a Buddhist monk, occupying his seat in his house. He began to speak harshly. But Siggava spoke to him kindly, and asked him a question from the Cittayamaka. Tissa could not answer it. He expressed desire to learn the teachings of the Buddha, and with the consent of his parents, he joined the Buddhist Sangha under Ven. Siggava. While Siggava instructed him in the Vinaya, Candavajji instructed him in the Sutta and the Abhidhamma Pitakas. In due course, he became an acknowledged leader of the Buddhist community at Pataliputra.[50]

After Asoka embraced Buddhism, a large number of persons/heretics started donning the robes of Buddhist monks for the sake of gain and honour showered by the State and the people. This made the Sangha corrupt. Seeing this, Moggaliputta Tissa suggested to Asoka to convene a Buddhist Council in order to maintain the purity of the Sangha. As some heretics had even started distorting the teachings of the Buddha, Moggaliputta Tissa also compiled a treatise entitled Kathavatthu in which he refuted all points of controversy about the Buddha-Dhamma. The Third Buddhist Council convened by Asoka was held in 253 BC. at Pataliputra (Patna) under the Presidentship of Moggaliputta[51] Tissa. This Council, attended by 1000 eminent Buddhist monks, not only recited the Tipitaka but also approved and accepted as one of Abhidhamma books, the new treatise, Kathavatthu, compiled by Moggaliputa Tissa. It is said that thousands of false Bhikkhus were disrobed after this Council. Moggaliputa Tissa also organised the despatch of Buddhist missionaries[52] to various lands. He also accompanied

the Emperor to the holy Buddhist shrines. He also helped him in setting up the Dhamma training centres at various places. Thus Moggaliputta Tissa was in all respects a spiritual friend, philosopher and guide to Asoka the Great.

Moggaliputta Tissa died at the ripe age of eighty years in the twenty-sixth year of Asoka's reign. The relics[53] of Moggaliputta Tissa, and nine other Arhats who lived at the time of Asoka, have been discovered from Stupa No. 2 at Sanchi. The other nine relics are of:

(1) Kosikuputta, (2) Gotiputta, (3) Mahavanaya, (4) Apagira, (5) Kodiniputta, (6) Kasapagota, (7) Majjhima, (8) Haritaputta, and (9) Vacchiya-Suvijayata.

Nagasena

Very little is known about the life of Nagasena, the author of the most important non-canonical Pali work 'Milinda-panha' or Questions of Milinda. The very brief bio-data of Nagasena contained in the Milindapanha itself tells us that this wise Buddhist monk was born at Kajangala, a big town near the Himalayas on the eastern border of the Middle country and that his father was called Sonuttara. As a child, Nagasena was very intelligent and eager to learn more and more. After completing the study of the Vedas, history and other subjects of Brahmanic tradition, his inquisitive mind led him to the Buddhist doctrine. He studied Buddha-Dhamma under Ven. Rohana, and entered the Order. Later, he studied under the Elder Assagutta of Vattaniya. Thereafter, he was sent by Assagutta to Pataliputra where he made a thorough study of all aspects of Buddhism under the able guidance of Dharmarakshita of Asokarama Vihara. Thus by the time Nagasena proceeded to the Sankheyya monastery at Sagala in Punjab, he was well versed with the Buddhist doctrine. And when chance came to solve the knotty problems put by King Milinda, Nagasena faired extremely well.

Menander or Milinda, a Greek King, ruled over the North-West India towards the latter part of the second century BC. Milinda was a well-informed scholar and was keen to know the essence of Indian religions. He approached many teachers but none could satisfy his curious mind. So he was disheartened and exclaimed,

"Ah, the whole of India is empty prattle. There is none who is capable of debating with me and dispelling my doubts". Then one day, per chance, he saw Nagasena passing nearby his palace at Sagala (modern Sialkot). Milinda was attracted by the calm and serene personality of Nagasena. He summoned him to his palace and a conversation started. After formal greetings, the king asked, "Sir, what is your name". "Maharaja, I am known as Nagasena. My brother bhikkhus address me thus. Though parents call their children Nagasena, Surasena, Virasena and the like but all this is just conventional. In reality there does not exist any individual as such". The king challenges this statement. This prompts Nagasena to explain the Buddhist doctrine of egolessness (no-soul). He asks Milinda a counter question as to how he came to the meeting. When the king says he came by chariot, Nagasena cries: "Hear, you Yonakas and bhikkhus: Milinda raja said 'I came by chariot'. If Maharaja you came by chariot, tell me what this 'chariot' is". And goes on to explain that as the wheel, sticks, yoke, etc. do not constitute the "chariot", similarly the different components of an individual and the individual (say Nagasena) does not exist apart from them. After another question as to Nagasena's seniority, Milinda requested for further discussion. Nagasena consented provided that the discussion is held at a scholarly level and that the king would discuss like a learned man and not as a king. Milinda agreed. In a calm and scholastic atmosphere, therefore, discussion commenced next day and lasted for many days.

The record of the dialogue between king Milinda and Venerable Nagasena has been preserved for us in the form of 'Milindapanha',[54] a Pali work. It is divided into seven parts and contains 304 questions which cover almost all aspects of Buddhism. Of these, the first chapter is of introductory nature, while the remaining chapters deal with doctrinal matters. The second chapter is titled Lakkhanapanha or the distinguishing marks of moral qualities. In it the most important questions of Buddhist ethics and psychology are discussed with apt similes. The third chapter Vimuticchedana or removal of doubts has 44 main questions on various aspects of Buddhism. In one question Milinda asks:[55]

"Very good, revered agasena. But is there a Buddha?"

"Yes Sir, there is a Buddha."

"But is it possible, revered Nagasena, to point to the Buddha as being either here or there?"

"Sir, the Lord has attained Nirvana in the Nirvana-element that has no groups of existence still remaining. It is not possible to point to him the Lord as being either here or there".

"Make a simile."

"What do you think about this Sir? When some flame in a great burning mass of fire goes out, is it possible to point to the flame as being either here or there?"

"No, revered Sir, that flame has ceased to be, it has disappeared".

"Even so, Sir, the Lord has attained Nirvana in the Nirvana--element that has no groups of existence still remaining. The Lord has gone. It is not possible to point to him as being here or there. But it is possible, Sir, to point to the Lord by means of the Dhamma-body, for Dhamma, Sir was taught by the Lord".

"Very good, revered Nagasena".

The fourth chapter titled Mendakapanha or the puzzling problems has a large number of questions under 83 sub-headings: the last one being in regard to Nirvana. The fifth chapter is 'Anumana' or the solutions of problems of Inference. It has two parts, (a) Dhamma-nagar of the Buddha, and (b) the glorification of the Dhuttangas or a set of ascetic practices. Part (b) of this chapter is treated by some scholars as a separate chapter, thus dividing the Milindapanha into seven parts. The sixth chapter titled 'Opammakathapanha' or similes has six sub-parts covering 67 categories.

While King Milinda stands fully identified on the basis of historical evidence available independently of the Milindapanha, it is not so in the case of Nagasena. This has aroused doubts among the scholars about the authorship of the Milindapanha. Some scholars feel that the present Pali work is a translation of an original that may have been written, in North-West India, in Sanskrit or some northern Prakrit. Further, a view has been expressed

by more than one scholar that the original Milindapanha by Nagasena perhaps contained only first three chapters and that the other chapters may have been added later. This view is derived from the translation of the Milindapanha available in Chinese[56] which has only first three chapters. And at the end of the third chapter of the Pali work also, it is clearly written, "Reply to the Questions of King Milinda ends". The other view[57] is that the Chinese translation may have been limited to three chapters by the translator of his own choice and that the entire work may be the handiwork of Nagasena. Leaving aside these doubts about the authorship of the last three chapters, the fact remains that the Milindapanha covers a wide range of Buddhist tenets, metaphysics, ethics and psychology. It is the only Pali non-canonical text which finds favour with both the Theravada and the Mahayana Buddhists. Further Buddhaghosha, the great Pali scholar and commentator of fifth century AD, in his commentaries quotes Milindapanha as an authority on a level with the canonical[58] texts. As such "it is an indisputable fact that in post-canonical literature, no other treatise equals the Milindapanha".

Buddhaghosha

With the rise of Mahayana in the first century AD the study of Pali seems to have been neglected. However, the Theravadins continued to adhere to the Pali Canon. The greatest Pali scholar and commentator was Buddhaghosha who flourished in the fifth century AD. According to Mahavamsa, a chronicle of Ceylon, where Buddhaghosha accomplished his literary pursuits, he was born in the vicinity of Bodh Gaya. Another tradition is that he hailed from South India.

To follow the Mahavamsa tradition, Ghosha (original name of Buddhaghosha) was well versed in the Vedas and other Brahmanical literature when quite young. He became so proficient that he could assert his knowledge among the great scholars. In fact, he went from place to place in search of adversaries. One day per chance Maha Thera Revata, the head of Bodh Gaya monastery, heard Ghosha reciting sutras from Patanjali at a place near Bodh Gaya. Impressed by the correctness of Ghosha's pronunciation, Ven. Revata engaged him in a discussion. Curious Ghosha asked, "Do you understand these sutras?"

"Yes, I do; they are faulty". Maha Thera Revata criticized the Patanjali sutra so vehemently that Ghosha felt humiliated. He then requested Revata to enunciate his doctrine. When the Maha Thera recited a para from the Abhidhamma-pitaka, Ghosha found it beyond his comprehension, and requested Revata to teach him the same. "Provided you enter the Order according to the rules of the Sangha", replied the Maha Thera. Thus under dramatic circumstances, Ghosha was initiated into Buddhism and given the name of Buddhaghosha.

By the time Buddhaghosha came on the scene Pali Buddhism had lost lustre in India. More and more scholars were turning to Sanskrit. But the Bodh Gaya monks stood firm in their allegiance to Pali. Under their guidance, Buddhaghosha studied Buddhist philosophy diligently. He also compiled a treatise on Buddhism 'Nanodaya'. He also planned to compose commentaries on Abhidhamma and the Suttas. On knowing his intention, his teacher, Maha Thera Revata advised Buddhaghosha to go to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) saying thus:[59]

"The original Tripitaka alone has been brought here from Sri Lanka. Here we neither possess commentaries nor the tradition coming down from various teachers. But in Lanka, there are commentaries originally brought down by the wise Mahinda and later translated into the language of the island. Go there and study them, so that they may be beneficial to all."

Thus encouraged and inspired, Buddhaghosha went to Sri Lanka in the reign of King Mahanama (410-432) AD and reached the Mahavihara at Anuradhapura. While staying in the Mahavihara, Buddhaghosha made a thorough study of the Sinhalese commentaries. He also heard the tradition of the elders from Thera Sanghapala. Convinced of their usefulness, he then sought permission of the bhikkhu-Sangha of the Mahavihara to translate the commentaries from Sinhalese to Pali. In order to test his knowledge and his capabilities, the learned Theras asked Buddhaghosha to comment on a Pali stanza. In response to this, Buddhaghosha compiled a compedium of the whole of the Tripitaka and named it Visuddhimagga or "The Path of Purification". Highly pleased with his performance, the bhikkhus of the Mahavihara gave all the facilities to Buddhaghosha and placed all the Sinhalese commentaries at his disposal.

The Visuddhimagga has 23 chapters. Of them, the

first two chapters are devoted to sila and dhutanga practices, the next eleven chapters to samadhi, and the last ten chapters, to panna. As says[60] Ven. U. Dhammaratana, "Meditation is an essential part of the Buddhist way of life. So the meditational practices cannot be explained apart from the fundamental doctrines of Buddhism. In course of his explanations, Buddhaghoshacariya has taken full opportunity to give elaborate expositions of these doctrines. As such, his work has served not only as a manual of meditation but also as the standard work on the Theravada Buddhism as a whole. No other school of Buddhism has handed down to us a work of such importance. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that the Visuddhimagga, the masterpiece of Buddhaghoshacariya, occupies a unique position in the field of Buddhism in particular and the religious literature of the world in general."

Besides the Visuddhimagga, Buddaghosha wrote commentaries on the Vinaya-Pitaka, Patimokkha, Digha-Nikaya, Majjhima-Nikaya, Anguttara-Nikaya, Khuddaka-Patha, Sutta-Nipata, and on all the seven texts of the Abhidhamma-Pitaka. The commentaries on the Dhammapada and the Jataka are also ascribed to Buddhaghosha. The voluminous literature produced by Buddhaghosha exists to this day and "is the basis for the explanation of many crucial points of Buddhist philosophy which without them would have been unintelligible." The commentaries and the Visuddhimagga of Buddhaghosha are not only a great achievement in post-Tripataka literature but they are also a key to the Tripitaka.

Buddhadatta

Another Pali scholar who flourished in the fifth century AD was Buddhadatta, who was senior contemporary of Buddhaghosha. He had gone to Ceylon earlier. When he was returning to India after completing his studies, his boat crossed another boat carrying Buddhaghosha to Ceylon. As they met, they introduced themselves and exchanged pleasantries. As they departed, it seems, Buddhadatta requested Buddhaghosha to send copies of the commentaries, as and when compiled, to him in India. Buddhaghosha appears to have done this. On return from Ceylon, Buddhadatta stayed in a Vihara built by a lay upasaka, Krishnadasa or Vishnudasa, on the banks of

the river Kaveri. Three important works of Buddhadatta are: Abhidhammavatara (Summary of Buddhaghosha's commentaries on the Abhidhammapitaka), Vinaya-Vimicchaya (Summary of the Buddhaghosha's commentaries on the Vinaya-Pitaka), and Madhuratthavilasini (Commentary on the Buddhavamsa).

Dhammapala

The last Pali scholar, who appears to have lived in the sixth century AD, also hailed from South India. He was a native of Badaratittha, a place on the southern coast of India. According to Hiuen Tsang, he was born at Kanchi, the capital of Tamil Nadu in those days. Dhammapala spent stayed for some time at Nagapatana in an ancient Vihara. Most probably, Dhammapala had studied at Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka as he mention in his works the Atthakathas of the Mahavihara of Anuradhapura. Further, he not only refers to the commentaries of Buddhaghosha but also follows almost his style. Dhammapala wrote seven commentaries on such books of the Khuddaka-Nikaya, which had not been covered by Buddhaghosha. His famous work the Parmattha-dipani, is an exposition of the Khuddaka-Nikaya covering mainly Udana, Itivuttaka, Vimanavatthu, Peta-vatthu, Thera-gatha, Theri-gatha, and Cariya-Pitaka. The other commentaries attributed to Dhammapala are:

(i) Parmattha-manjusa (Commentary on Buddhaghosha's Visuddhimagga)
(ii) Netti-pakarnassa Attha Samvannana (Commentary on Netti, a post-canonical work)

SANSKRIT SCHOLARS

Asvaghosha

As Buddhism spread and more and more people took to the royal road to Nibbana, Pali gave way to Sanskrit. The Mahayana movement gave further impetus to the use of Sanskrit by the Buddhists. The first great personality in the Sanskrit field was Asvaghosha. He was a great Sanskrit poet and dramatist who flourished in the first century AD; and was a contemporary of Kanishka. He

was a native of Saketa (Ayodhya) and his mother's name was Suvarnaksi. His two well-known works are: Buddhacarita and Saundarananda. At the end of these two poetic works, he clearly says:[61] "Arya Suvarnaksiputrsya Saketakasya bhikser acarya-bhadant asvaghosasya mahakaver Mahavadinah krtiriyam". This would mean "Venerable mendicant and teacher Asvaghosha of Saketa, the son of Suvarnakshi, the great poet, eloquent and of universal renown". The great poet was perhaps converted to Buddhism by Parsva who played an important role in the Fourth Buddhist Council held during the reign of Kanishka.

Of the three noted works of Asvaghosha, the first Buddhacarita, (Life of the Buddha) is a mahakavya, an epic, depicting the life of the Buddha. The Chinese translation, which was known to I-tsing in the seventh century AD, had 28 cantos. The Tibetan version of the same has also 28 cantos. It begins with the conception of the Buddha and after narrating his life and Maha-parinirvana, closes with an account of the First Buddhist Council and the reign of Asoka. In Sanskrit, however, only 12 cantos (2-13) are extant in their entirety, and another two the (Ist and 14th) survive only partially.[62]

The remaining three chapters (Nos. XV-XVII) available in the present Sanskrit text are not considered authentic.[63] These appear to have been added by a certain Amritananda, who copied it at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and added the conclusion. The Buddhacarita, the earliest mahakavya in Sanskrit, and a work of ornate poetry on the life of the Buddha remained popular for centuries in India and even in other Buddhist lands. I-tsing, the Chinese pilgrim, who was in India from 673-685 AD says that at the time of his visit "the Buddhacarita was widely read and sung throughout the five divisions of India and the countries of the Southern Sea".

The Saundarananda (The Handsome Nanda) describes in 18 cantos, which survive in full in Sanskrit, the ordination of Buddha's half-brother, Nanda. In this poem, Asvaghosha explains the story of the love-lorn Nanda, who has no interest in the spiritual life and longs to a union with his beautiful wife, Sundari. When Buddha shows him the heavenly nymphs, he devotes himself to ascetic practices in order to reach the heaven. After Ananda teaches him that even heavenly pleasures are empty and vain, Nanda abandons the pursuit of heavenly pleasures. In the ultimate, he meditates rigorously and becomes

an Arhat. While narrating the story of Nanda, Asvaghosha also explains at length his view of the path to Enlighten ment.

The third work, Sariputraprakarana is the most important drama written by Asvaghosha. In fact, this is the oldest specimen of an Indian drama so far discovered. This nine act play deals with the conversion of Sariputra and Maudgalyayana and also involves some philosophical discussion artistically introduced.

Three other works attributed to Asvaghosha are: Vajrasuchi, Gandistotra and Mahayanasradhotpada. Of these, the first one, Vajrasuchi or "Diamond Needle" is remarkable for its emphasis on the principle of equality and the vehement attack on the caste-system. While doing so, Asvaghosha profusely quotes as authority from the Brahmanical literature. The Gandistotra-gatha, which consists of 29 stanzas is a beautiful lyrical poem. The last work, Mahayanasradhotpada deals with the early doctrines of Mahayana.

Doubtless, Asvaghosha occupies a unique position in the history of Buddhism as well as in the Sanskrit poetry tradition in general. His works are remarkable for the spontaneity and force of language, poetic charm and rhythm. He was a worthy predecessor of Kalidasa. In fact, Kalidasa was "indebited to him for description of some incidents, similes, phrases and words".

Over and above all this, Asvaghosha was a great leader of his times who used all his literary skills for the propagation of the Buddha-Dhamma. He was not satisfied merely with writing books but he worked throughout his life like a selfless missionary and preacher. Gifted as he was a poet, dramatist, musician, scholar and debator, he went on foot from village to village, town to town and city to city playing on his instruments and singing songs in praise of the Buddha. He wrote dramas about the Buddha and had them staged, acting himself also when necessary. His dramas were truly full of missionary zeal. In one of the plays, while explaining the advantages of taking refuge in the Buddha-Dhamma, Asvaghosha says, "In the cold take refuge at the fire, during the summer heat in the cool stream, in darkness and gloom with Buddha". He alone gives 'Amata' sweet realization of immortality". Wherever he went, he played music, acted and sang about the Buddha-Dhamma and the happiness connected with it. Thus Asvaghosha dragged Buddhism

out from the monasteries and made it a topic of the market place and of every house. The masses were greatly impressed by the life story of the Buddha so beautifully told by the poet. Paying tribute to Asvaghosha, S. Levi, a French savant, says:[64] "He stands at the starting point of all the great currents that renewed and transformed India towards the beginning of the Christian era. Poet, musician, preacher, moralist, philosopher, playwright, taleteller, he is an inventor in all these arts, and excells in all; in his richness and variety he recalls Milton, Goethe, Kant and Voltaire."

Nagarjuna

Nagarjuna who propounded the Mādhyamika school of philosophy, also known as Sunyayada, was one of the greatest Buddhist saint scholars. Watters described[65] him as "one of the wonders and mysteries of latter Buddhism", and Valles Poussin calls[66] him "mysterious and miraculous person".

As in the case of many other Buddhist savants, mystery surrounds the life of Nagarjuna. It is, however, generally agreed that he was born in South India in the second century AD, and was a friend and contemporary of the Satavahana King, Yajnasri Satakarai (166-196 AD). According to another tradition, Nagarjuna was a native of South Kosala or modern Vidarbha.

According to the biography of Nagarjuna translated into Chinese in about AD 405 by Kumarajiva, Nagarjuna on joining the Buddhist Order studied the Buddhist texts available to him and grasped their meaning in only 90 days; and not being satisfied with them, he wandered in search of other texts. Consequently, he received the Mahayana sutra, Prajnaparamitasutra, from an old monk in the Himalayan region;[67] and also procured a commentary on it with the help of a Nagaraja (Naga chief) who led him into the sea and opened up for him the "Treasury of the Seven Jewels"[68](Saptaratnakosa)".

According to Bhikshu Sangharakshita,[69] "His name which is derived from Arjuna, a kind of tree, and naga, a serpent of "dragon" as the Chinese translations more expressely have it, refers to the "legend" (according to modern scholarship) that the sage was born beneath an Arjuna tree and that he visited the submarine kingdom of the nagas, where the naga kings transmitted to him

the Large Prajnaparamita Sutra, which had been entrusted to their care by the Lord Buddha, need not be understood too literally. What they received, and what they transmitted, was not so much a book as a teaching and a realization". Whatever may be the truth in this legend, the Mahayana sutra, Prajnaparamita, became popular only after Nagarjuna propagated its teachings.

A large number of works are attributed to Nagarjuna, who was doubtless a versatile, genious and philosopher. Among his authentic works, the most important and the monumental one is the Madhyamaksasastra (Madhyamika-karika) in which Nagarjuna makes a critical examination of other Buddhist schools, especially the Sarvastivada view point. This work "written in a supremely forceful and elegant style, consists of 400 verses (karikas) distributed over 27, chapters, each of which is devoted to the examination of a particular topic."

The Madhyamika school derives its name from the middle path it advocates, that is, the non-acceptance of the two views concerning existence and non-existence, eternity and non-eternity, self and non-self and so on. In short, it advocates neither the theory of reality nor that of the unreality of the world, but merely of relativity".[70] In the Madhyamika-Karika, Nagarjuna presents in a systematic manner the philosophy of the Madhyamika school. It teaches that sunyata (the indescribable absolute) is the absolute. There is no difference between samsara (phenomenal world) and nirvana or sunyata reality)". In other words, the Madhyamikas believe that "all things are of a non-essential and indefinable character, and void at bottom". Since the Madhyamika school holds sunyata to be the central idea of its philosophy, it is called Sunyavada also.

The Pratityasamputpada-hrdaya-sastra (Secret of the Casually Dependent Origination) gives an exposition of the twelve linked chain of the course of phenomenal existence. The Yukti-sastika (Sixty Arguments) and Suayata-saptati (Seventy verses on Unreality) are short compediums on the basic tenets of Mahayana. The Mahaprajnaparamita-sastra is a voluminous commentary on the Large 'Prajnaparamita'. Another important comnentary written by Nagarjuna is Dasabhumi-vibhasa-sastra. The Bhavasankranti-sastra is another notable commentary. Nagarjuna also wrote devotional verses, Catuh-stava, a kind of hymn in four parts, Lastly, the "Suhrllekha or Letter to a Friend" which he wrote as a letter of moral and spiritual exhortation to his friend, the Satavahana King.

Other works[71] of Nagarjuna are: Vigrahavyavartani, Dvasdasmukha-sastra, Ekasloka-sastra, Vaidlaya-Sutra, Prakarana, Mahayana-vimsika, Bodhicitta-vivarna and Ratnavli.

The Madhyamika Karika of Nagarjuna, being the basic text of Madhyamika school of thought has been a subject of comment for centuries. There are as many as seven commentaries by eminent acharyas, besides the "Akutobhaya (The Safe One) said to be an auto comment by Nagarjuna. The best known commentary is that of Chandrakirti, the Prasannapada or "Clear Worded". This commentary still survives in Sanskrit; the others being available only in Tibetan or Chinese translations. In the Chinese collection three available commentaries are: (I) Prajnamula of Pingala, (II) Prajnapradipa of Bhavaviveka, and (III) Mahayana madhyamakadarsana-vyakhya-sastra of Sthiramati. Those available in the Tibetan Collection are: Bhavaviveka's Prajnapradipa, Buddhapalita's Vriti and Chandrakirti's Prasannapada.

Nagarjuna's letter to the Satavahana King, "Suhrllekha" has also been a popular text with the Chinese and Tibetan scholars.[72] It was translated into Chinese three times-by Gunavarman, and Sanghavarman in the fifth century AD, and by I-tsing in the seventh century AD. Suhrllekha was translated into Tibetan by Sarvajnadeva. The Tibetan Collection also has four commentaries on Suhrllekha. Of these, the best one is by Mi-pham written in the nineteenth century. In India, Suhrllekha was a popular religious book for centuries. According to the Chinese pilgrim-scholar, I-tsing, who was in India in AD 673-685 Nagarjuna's Suhrllekha was so popular at the time of his visit that "children vied with each other in committing it to memory and the adults considered it their life long companion". The reason for Suhrllekha's popularity seems to be its emphasis on the observance of the path of piety as taught by the Buddha. Given below are few illustrations[73] from the Suhrllekha, which in all consists 123 stanzas addressed to the Satavahana king.

1: The Buddha has stated, "Carefulness is the basis of immortality;

Negligence is the state of death".

Therefore, in order for you to increase the wholesome,

Always be concerned and devoted. (13)

2. There are four kinds of people-

Those who go from light to light,

Those who go from darkness to darkness,

Those who go from light to darkness, and

Those who go from darkness to light.

Be one who belongs to the first of these. (19)

3. Confidence, ethical behaviour, charity, learning,

Self-respect which is pure, decorum, and appreciative discrimination.

Have been declared by the Buddha as the seven precious possessions.

Know that the 'benefits' of other possessions are of no ultimate value. (32)

4. Always cultivate benevolence, loving-kindness,

Joy and equanimity in the proper spirit.

Just like the One who formerly cultivated these indefatigably.

You will attain the pleasures of a pure world. (40)

5. As far as liberation, which depends on yourself, is concerned,

There is no one else who can be a friend.

Practice meditative concentration, by means of learning and ethical behaviour,

And apply yourself to the four truths. (52)

6. You must, by ethical behaviour, appreciative discrimination, and mental integration,

Strive to attain the controlled and pure citadal of Nirvana

Which has nothing to do with old age or death (and which

Is freed from earth, fire, wind, sun, and moon (105)

7. This life is 'a world of suffering', and

It has, as its main cause, suffering,

The abolition of this cause leads to liberation.

The eight-fold noble path is the path by which one attains liberation.(114)

8. What need is there for me to ask you, over and over again, to overcome fear?

The purpose of my counsel is exactly this:

The Buddha has declared, "One must control one's mind.

The mind is the root of life's meaning". (117)

The mighty, Nagarjuna lived a very long[74], life. He is said to have possessed some uncommon psychic powers and knowledge of chemical or medical sciences, and had prolonged his life through various expedients. Nagarjuna travelled all over India, and as a result of his towering personality Buddhism became quite popular. Though he was associated with Nalanda but he mainly lived at Amaravati and Sriparvata in Andhra. Towards the evening of his life he stayed at Sriparvata where the Satvahana King had built a monastery for him. Sriparvarta (in Guntur distt.) was later named as Nagarjunakonda after his name.

After the advent of Nagarjuna, it was primarily the Madhyamika philosophy which travelled abroad and became the basis of Mahayana Buddhism there. Even today, it is so in the countries following the Mahayana tradition. In India, the impact of Nagarjuna was so great that "practically all the Brahminical schools found it necessary to adapt the dialectic of Nagarjuna to their own needs. Gaudapada and Sankara, as is well known, borrowed much of their method and many of their conclusions from the Madhyamikas. The Advaita system of Vedanta is in a sense a less rigorous and more compromising continuation of the Madhyamika teaching."[75]

Arya Deva

Arya Deva, a Sinhalese by birth, was a worthy and immediate successor of Nagarjuna. Arya Deva is also

known as Kanadeva, or "the one-eyed", and Nilanetra, or "the blue-eyed". It is said that learning the fame of Nagarjuna, he came from Sri Lanka and met Nagarjuna at Nagarjunakonda. About their first meeting, the Tibetan tradition[76] tells us that on reaching there, Arya Deva addressed the gate-keeper, saying: "Please be good enough to announce me". Accordingly, the gate-keeper informed Nagarjuna of Arya Deva's arrival. Nagarjuna filled up his begging bowl with water and commanded his disciple and attendant to go and hold the water in front of Arya Deva.

The disciple held the begging-bowl as told and soon returned with perturbation to Nagarjuna. "What did the visitor say?" Nagarjuna asked. The disciple answered excitedly: He was silent and said nothing, he only dropped a needle into the water". Nagarjuna said: "He is a wise man. To know the springs of action, this is the privilege of a Deva, to penetrate subtle principles is the privilege of an Arya. Such full wisdom as this entitles him to be allowed to enter forthwith."

Thus gaining the confidence of Nagarjuna at the very first meeting, Arya Deva soon became his chief disciple. Like Nagarjuna, Arya Deva was also the author of a number of valuable works on the Madhyamika philosophy. The Catuh Sataka, a work of 400 Karikas, written by him is considered as one of the principle works of the Madhyamika school, besides Nagarjuna's Madhyamika-Karika. In this work, Arya Deva while clarifying the meaning of Relativity, or Non-substantiality, has devoted even greater attention than Nagarjuna to refute the views of the Sankhya and Vaisesika systems of Brahaminical philosophy".[77]

The Catuh Sataka is the only work of Arya Deva discovered in original Sanskrit. It was discovered from Nepal. It is also available in translation in Tibetan. A commentary on this work was written by Chandrakirti in the sixth century AD which is available in Tibetan translation. A condensed form of Catuh Sataka is known as the Sata-Shastra or "One hundred Verses Shastra". The first part of this work was translated into Chinese by Kumarajiva in AD 404.

Arya Deva was a multi-faceted genius. It is said that Arya Deva was "a formidable debator and many times vanquished his opponents in the public discussions". Thus he had created many enemies. Enraged by the defeat

of a Hindu scholar, inimical to Buddhism, one of his disciples attacked Arya Deva with a sword while he was engaged in meditation, as a result of which he died. This took place at Ranganatha, a suburb of Kanchipuram[78] in Tamil Nadu, where Arya Deva had stayed for a number of years.

Asanga and Vasubandhu

Two illustrious brothers, Asanga and Vasubandhu, who flourished in the fourth century AD; have greatly enriched Buddhism. Asanga was the elder brother of Vasubandhu. Both were born at Purushapura, modern Peshawar in Pakistan and educated in Kashmir. Their father belonged to a noble Kaushika family. And their mother was a very pious Buddhist lady. It is said that before her marriage, Prasannashila often used to say to herself: I, being a woman, am incapable of preaching the Buddha-Dhamma. But, if I give birth to sons, I will make of them propagaters of the Dhamma".

Prasannashila was blessed with three sons.[79] She named her first son, Asanga, i.e. "One not in bondage to anything". The second son was named as Vasubandhu which means "a kinsman of wealth". The third son was named as Vrinchivasta. When quite young, both Asanga and Vasubandhu were ordained as Buddhist monks. To begin with, both the brothers belonged to Sarvastivada school of Buddhism which was predominent in the North-West India in those days. Later, Asanga became a pupil of Maitryanatha, the first exponent of the Yogacara which emphasized the practice of yoga (meditation) as the most effective method for the attainment of the highest truth (Bodhi). Asanga was the most eminent teacher of Yogacara school. In fact, he is regarded as the founder of the Yogacara school. He wrote many books on the Yogacara school of thought and endeavoured to spread Mahayana Buddhism. According to Taranatha, a Tibetan historian, Asanga travelled all over India and founded atleast twenty monasteries for the training of Mahayana monks.

The most important works of Asanga are: the Mahayana sangraha, the Prakarna-aryvaca, the Yogacarabhumi-sastra, the Mahayana-sutralankara, Dharmadharmata-vibhanga, (the Mahayana-Abhidharma-Samyukta-Sangati-Shastra), and Mahayana-sanparigraha. These works have

come down to us through Chinese and Tibetan Collections.

Vasubandhu, the younger brother of Asanga, who had made special study of Abhidharma in Kashmir, adhered to the Sarvastivada school for a long time. Vasubandhu's most important work, composed during his Sarvastivadin phase, the Abhidharma Kosa is really an encyclopaedia of Buddhist doctrine and philosophy. This grand work of 600 Karikas proved invaluable for the propagation of Buddhism in India and abroad. In India, it was so popular that in the seventh century AD, Bana while describing the hermitage of the Buddhist sage, Divakaramitra says, in Harsha-carita[80] "Even some monkeys who had fled to the three Refuges (the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha) were gravely busy performing the ritual of the chaitya, while some devout parrots, skilled in the Sakya Sastras, were explaining the kosa (Abhidharma Kosa)". The Abhidharmakosa has not come down to us in original Sanskrit. However, a commentary in Sanskrit by Yasomitra, titled the Abhidharmakosa-Vyakhya is known. Its Chinese and Tibetans versions are also available.

Yasomitra in his commentary on Abhidharma-Kosa says[81] that 'on account of his spiritual attainments, Vasubandhu was known as a second Buddha by his contemporaries "Yam Buddhimatam agrayam dvitiya-miva Buddham itiyahuh".

After his conversion to Mahayana by Asanga, Vasubandhu wrote the Parmartha-sartha-saptati (Seventy Verses on the Highest Truth), an attack on the philosophy of the Sankhya teacher Vindhyavasi, who was contemporary of Vasubandhu. He also wrote commentaries on the Saddharma-pundarika sutra or (the Lotus Sutra), the Mahaparinirvana sutra, the Buddha Avatamsaka sutra (the Buddha Community Sutra) and the Vajrachhedika-prajnaparamita. Vasubandhu's three important works on idealism are: Vijnapti Matrata Trimshika, the Vimshatka and the Mahayana Pancha Skandhaka. Some other works on Buddhism are also attributed to Vasubandhu. While Assanga called this school Yogacara, Vasubandhu calls it Vijnanavada as it holds nothing but consciouness only to be the ultimate reality. Parmartha, in his biography of Vasubandhu, says:[82] "The sense conveyed in his compositions is fine and excellent; there is no one who, on hearing or seeing it, does not believe and pursue it. Therefore all those who study the Mahayana and Hinayana in India and in all the frontier countries use the works of Vasubandhu as their text-books".

Besides his attainments in the literary and spiritual fields, Vasubandhu was also an able statesman. In AD 320, Chandragupta of Bihar founded the Gupta Empire. On his death in AD 330, Chandragupta was succeeded by his son, Samudragupta who ruled up to 380. Though a Hindu, Samudragupta had as his adviser Vasubandhu. After his father's death, Chandragupta II ascended the throne and assumed the title of Vikramaditya 'Sun of Valour'. Vasubandhu continued to be his adviser also. Vasubandhu's association with this royal house was, it seems, helpful in bringing the Gupta Kings closer to Buddhism. It is said that when King Vikramaditya rewarded[83] him with three lakhs of gold for his literary work entitled Paramartha-Saptati, or "Seventy Verses on the Highest Truth". Vasubandhu spent this wealth on building three Buddhist monasteries: one for the monks of the Sarvastivada School, one for the Mahayana monks and one for the Order of the Buddhist nuns (Bhikkhunies). Vasubandhu is also credited with the building of a Buddhist monastery at Ayodhya, where he died at the age of eighty.

Dinnaga

A mighty Buddhist intellectual of the early fifth century AD was Dinnaga or Dignaga. He was the founder of the Buddhist logic, and is often referred to as the Father of the Medieval Nyaya as a whole.

Dinnaga was born around 450 AD at Simhavaktra, a suburb of Kanchipuram[84] in South India. After completing his studies, while quite young, Dinnaga became a Buddhist monk and joined the Vatsiputriya school. It is said that one day, Nagadatta, his preceptor, asked Dinnaga "to meditate over the principle of the Ego (Atman) which from the stand point of the Vatsiputriyas was inexpressible and was neither identical with the groups of elements (Skandhas), nor differing from them". When Dinnaga expressed some scepticism about the existence of Ego, he was expelled from the community by his teacher. After meeting similar failure and experiencing dissatisfaction with some other teachers, Dinnaga finally came to Vasubandhu. Under Vasubandhu, Dinnaga studied all aspects of the Buddhist philosophy and became well-versed with all the texts of Buddhism. Thereafter, he began his literary career.

Dinnaga travelled all over India holding religious contests with scholars. At Nalanda, he defeated a Brahmin logician named Sadurjaya in a religious discussion. In Orissa, Dinnaga is said to have converted the royal treasurer, Bhadrapalita, who built in Dinnaga's honour a monastery. Generally, Dinnaga stayed in this monastery in the Bhorasila mountain in Orissa. Often he also stayed in the Accra monastery in Maharashtra.

Dinnaga wrote about a hundred treatises on logic, most of which are preserved in Chinese and Tibetan translations. His most important works are: Pramanasamuccaya (The Totality of Means of Correct Knowledge), Alambana-pariksha (The Examination of the Three Times), Hetuchakradamaru (The Wheel of Logical Reasons), Nyayamukha, Hastavala-prakarna, Arya Prajnaparmita-vivarana, and Abhidharmakosha-Marma-Pradipa, a commentary on Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakosa.

Prior to Dinnaga, all the Indian schools of logic followed the logic of the realist Nyaya school. Dinnaga for the first time "introduced new ideas in that logic, which then came to be recognised as Buddhist logic. Says Dalsukh Malvania,[85] "Before Dignaga, even Buddhist logic was more concerned with the art of discussion (vadavidya) than with the tools of that art. Dignaga was the first to deal with the problem of pramanas, the tool of discussion and source of valid knowledge and for this he composed his Pramanasamucchaya". Rightly, Dinnaga is hailed as the founder of Buddhist logic.

Dharmakirti

Dharmakirti, who lived in the seventh century AD, was another great Buddhist logician. He was the son of Koruṇanda of Tirumalaya[86] in South India. In his childhood, Dharmakirti studied the Vedas. Later he studied Buddhist philosophy at Nalanda. While at Nalanda, Dharmakirti joined the Buddhist Order as a disciple of Dharmapala who was at that time the Sanghasthavira (Chief) of the Nalanda Mahavihara. He studied logic from Isvarsena, a direct pupil of Dinnaga, and made a thorough study of the Pramanasamuccaya of Dinnaga. The date of Dharmakirti is not very clear. Some scholars are of the view that he lived from circa AD 620-690.[87]

Dharmakirti wrote seven important works. These are: 1. Pramanavartika, 2. Pramanavinischaya, 3. Nyayabindu, 4. Hetubindu, 5. Vadanyaya, 6. Sambandhapariksha, and 7. Santanantarasiddhi. As in other cases, all the works of Dharmakirti were lost in India. For a long time in modern India, nothing was known of Dharmakirti's works except Nyayabindu, which was published by Peterson in 1889. Thanks are due to the Tibetan scholars who preserved his works, some in original Sanskrit and all in Tibetan translation. In modern times, credit goes to Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan who made many hazardous trips to Tibet and brought back to India some of the manuscripts of Dharmakirti's works in Sanskrit and commentaries on them. Rahul Sankrityayana also edited Dharmakirti's monumental work Pramanavartika with three commentaries, as well as Vadanyaya. Prof. F. Th. Stcherbatsky a Russian Orientalist, through his monumental work, Buddhist Logic (1930) brought the name and fame of Dharmakirti to the notice of Western scholars.

All the works of Dharmakirti generally deal with the Buddhist theory of knowledge. Dharmakirti was a subtle philosophical thinker and dialectician, and his writings mark the highest summit reached in epistemological speculation by later Buddhism. Acknowledging his unsurpassed genius, Dr. Stcherbatksy calls Dharmakirti, the Kant of India.

Dharmakirti can be said to have finished the task which was begun by Dinnaga. He reinforced and re-interpreted some of the theories of Dinnaga and imparted a new vigour to Buddhist logic. The force of Dharmakirti's arguments was so great that many traditional ideas of other schools of thought had to be revised. About his influence, Dalsukh Malvania says[88] that Dharmakirti "is responsible for developing logic in its proper form and proportions. This can be surmised easily when we see the post-Dharmakirti writers revising the traditional ideas of various schools. There is not a single important philosophical work written in the middle ages in India which does not criticise or accept the theories expounded by Dharmakirti. Such was his influence on Indian writers of philosophy or logic that no serious writer in those days could ignore him."

Apart from being a great Buddhist logician and philosopher, Dharmakirti was also a great missionary. He travelled throughout India and tried to re-establish, through philosophy, the glory of Buddhism which was showing signs of decline. Dharmakirti opposed the Vedic philosophical

system and challenged the divine origin and infalliable authority of the Vedas. He also vehemently criticised the caste-system and Hindu rites and rituals. In a bold statement, Dharmakirti says, "Accepting the authority of the Vedas and some one as the creater, the desire of getting merit through the holy dip, the vanity of caste, and torturing the body to redeem the sins: these are the five characteristics of stupidity".

Dharmakirti died in a monastery in Kalinga[89] which was established by him.

OTHERS

The other eminent saint-scholars in the Sanskrit field were: I Dharmatrata (Ist century AD), who compiled an anthology containing 375 verses, corresponding to the verses of the Dhammapada, Udana, Suttanipata, and some other works of the Pali Canon. Fragments of this anthology in Sanskrit were found in Central Asia. A complete version in Tibetan is also available. 2-3. Parsva, the Spiritual Adviser to King Kanishka. At his instance, Kanishka convened the Fourth Buddhist Council which was presided over by Vasumitra. Among the commentaries prepared by the Council was the Mahavibhasa (Great Commentary) on the Jnanprasthana, composed by Parsva and Vasumitra. 4. Another famous scholar of this time was Katyayana of Tamsavana whose work Abhidharmajnana-prasthana Sastra was considered by the fourth Council. 5. Kumaralata, a junior contemporary of Asvaghosha, his work Kalpananamaditika, fragments of which were discovered in Turfan, is a collection of pious legends after the manner of the Jatakas and Avadanas 6. Matrceta was a poet and somewhat senior contemporary of Asvaghosa. It is said that he was also invited by Kanishka to his court, and he responded in a letter called 'the Maharaja Kanika-lekha'. This letter of 85 verses, now available in Tibetan only, admonishes the king to lead a moral life in the spirit of the Buddha. Other works of Matrceta are, the Catuh-Sataka Stotra, "the Hymn of Four Hundred Verses", and the Satapancasataka, "the Hymn of One Hundred and Fifty verses". Fragments of both these poems are available in the Central Asian manuscripts. I-tsing translated into Chinese in the seventh century AD, "the Hymn of One Hundred Fifty Verses". According to him, both these poems were

popular in India at the time of his visit. He says, "They are poems in simple and unadorned but beautiful language, and they evidently impressed the faithful more by their pious thoughts than by their form. It is delightful to hear these hymns recited in the assembly of monks". Both the hymns are available in Tibetan translation. 7. Aryacandra, also of the same period, composed the Maitreyakarana, "the prophecy about Maitreya" or the Maitreyasamiti, "the Meeting with Maitreya". Besides an incomplete manuscript, its translations are available in Chinese and Tibetan.

8. Aryasura (fourth century AD), was an eminent poet who composed Jatakamala or "Garland of Jatakas", in ornate and elegant language. The Jatakamala contains 34 Jatakas, stories of the Buddha in previous lives, intended to highlight the paramitas or perfections of a Bodhisattva. 9. Maitreyanatha or Maitreya, the teacher of Asanga, is by some scholars considered the real founder of the Yogacara school. Some works assigned to Asanga are considered in reality the works of Maitreya. 10. Sanghabhadra of Kashmir was senior contemporary of Vasubandhu. He composed the treatise Abhidharama-kosha-Sastra in 25000 slokas, containing altogether 800,000 words in order to over-throw propositions of Vasubandhu. It is said that later on he changed his views, and while dying he wrote a letter to Vasubandhu and sought to be pardoned. Thereupon, Vasubandhu himself changed the name of the Sastra and called it Nyayanusara-Sastra.

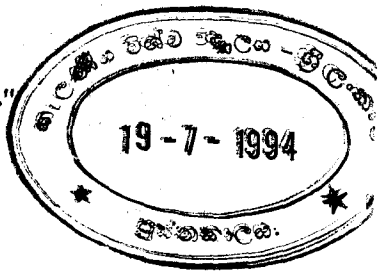
11-12 Buddhapalita and Bhavaviveka (or Bhavya), who flourished in the fifth century AD, were exponents of the Sunyavada school founded by Nagarjuna. They, however, differed in their approach and founded two schools of logical thinking known as the Prasangika school and the Svatantra school, respectively. While Buddhapalita attempted to develop a method of reasoning based on absurd questions of the opponent, Bhavaviveka seeks to prove the correctness of the Madhyamika doctrines by means of independent arguments. Both of them wrote commentaries which are available in Tibetan. 13. Chandrakirti, who lived in the sixth century AD, is considered the principle representative of the Prasangika school. According to Taranatha, he was born in South India, joined the Buddhist Sangha when quite young and studied the work of Nagarjuna under Kamalbuddhi, the pupil of Buddhapalita and Bhavya. Candrakirti later became

a Professor at Nalanda and wrote a number of works on the Madhyamika Philosophy. His commentary Prasannapada on the Mula-Madhyamaka-Karikas of Nagarjuna is considered the best commentary on that work. Another notable commentary by Candrakirti is on Arya Deva's Catuh sataka. His original important work is the Madhyamakavatara, "Introduction to the Middle Doctrine" which is available in the Tibetan Tanjur. 14. Chandragomin, a contemporary of Candrakirti, is well-known as grammerian, philosopher and poet. He is said to have composed a number of hymns and other works. Of his poetical works, only a religious poem in the form of a letter to his pupil, the Sisyalekha-Dharma-Kavya, has survived. 15. Divakaramitra, teacher of Rajyasri, sister of Harsha. He had his hermitage in the Vindhya forest. 16-22 Seven eminent Buddhist scholars under whom the Chinese pilgrim studied during his stay in India from 630-643 AD. After staying for two years in Kashmir, Hiuen Tsang came to Patti in Amritsar district, Punjab and spent 14 months from January AD 634 to March AD 635 and studied the Abhidharma with the Sastra-master Vinitaprabha. At Jalandhar, the pilgrim stayed for four months and further studied the Abhidharma with Chandravarma, a famous Buddhist scholar of Nagardhana monastery. He stayed for 4 1/2 months at Sugh in Haryana and studied Buddhism in the company of Jayagupta, another famous Buddhist scholar at that time. The other distinguished scholars under whom Hiuen Tsang studied Dhamma before joining the famous Nalanda University were: Mitrasena at Matipura; Viryasena of the Bhadra Vihara at Kanauj; and Tathagatagupta and Ksantisimha of Monghyr.

23-30 Eight illustrious teachers of Nalanda about whom Hiuen Tsang says "Dharmapala and Charidrapala who excited by their bequeathed teaching the thoughtless and worldly; Gunamati and Sthiramati, the streams of whose superior teaching spread abroad even now; Prabhamitra, with his clear discourses; Jinamitra, with his exalted eloquence; the pattern and fame of Jnanachandra reflect his brilliant activity, and Silabhadra. These illustrious personages known to all, excelled in their attainments all their distinugished predecessors, and passed the bounds of the ancients in their learning. Each of these composed some tons of treatises and commentaries which were widely diffused". 31-32 Prajna-deva and Jnana-prabha of Bodh Gaya monastery with whom Hiuen Tsang exchanged

letters after his return to China. 33. Lastly Santideva, who lived towards the close of the seventh century AD. was prominent poet and Madhyamika thinker. According to Taranatha, he was born in Saurashtra (Gujarat) and was the son of a king. This is confirmed by a fourteenth century biography of Santideva found in Nepal. In this manuscript, his father's name is mentioned as Raja Manjuvarma. He is also called Bhusuka because he was well-versed in the meditation called 'Bhusuka'. Three important works attributed to Santideva are: Siksa-Samuccaya, Sutra-Samuccaya, and Bodhicaryavatara. The Siksa-Samuccaya, "the Sum Total of the Doctrine", a work of 27 Karikas with an extensive commentary thereon, is a unique compedium of moral and spiritual ideas of Mahayana Buddhism. In the Bodhicaryavatara, "An Introduction to the Career of Enlightenment", Santideva takes the Bodhisattva ideal to new heights. He "prays to the Buddhas to light the lamp of religion for all those who are in ignorance; he beseches all Bodhisattvas to defer their Nirvana for the sake of the salvation of all beings", and finally offers himself for all beings:

"I desire to be protector to those who need protection,
A guide to those who wander in the desert,
and a ship, a landing stage and a bridge
To those who seek the Shore.
A lamp to those who need a lamp,
A coach to those who need a coach,
A slave to all beings who need a slave."



MISSIONARIES

Mahinda

When Asoka, on the advice of Moggaliputta Tissa, sent missionaries (dhamma-dutas) to various parts of India and the neighbouring countries, for propagating the Buddha-Dhamma, Mahinda was assigned the task of preaching Dhamma in Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Mahinda was 32 years old when he undertook the mission to Ceylon. He had joined the Buddhist Sangha at the age of 20 years, under the guidance of Moggaliputta Tissa. He was well-versed with the Tripitaka. Mahinda was accompanied by the theras Itthiya, Uttiya, Sambala and Bhaddasala,

the Samnera Sumana, who was the son of Sanghmitta, and a lay disciple Bhankuka, who was the son of a daughter of his aunt. Before leaving for Ceylon, Mahinda visited Sanchi (Vedisagiri) to meet his mother, Devi, and have her blessings.

The Mahavamsa and Dipavamsa, the chronicles of Sri Lanka, tell us that Ven. Mahinda and party reached Sri Lanka on the full moon day of Jettha, which was a day of national festival there. The king was at that time on a hunting expedition in the Mihintale hills. Seeing the theras with shaven heads dressed in yellow robes, of dignified mien and distinguished appearance, the king inquired as to who they were and from where they had come. In a dignified tone, Mahinda replied:[90]

"We are the disciples of the Lord of the Dhamma.
In compassion towards thee, Maharaja,
We have repaired hither from India".

On hearing these words, the king laid aside his bow and arrow, exchanged greetings with the visitor and sat down near him. Following further conversation, Mahinda preached the Culahatthipadopama-sutta (The Lesser Discourse on the Elephant foot-print Simile). At the end of the discourse, the king and his large party embraced the new faith. On the invitation of the King, Mahinda and his colleagues next day went to Anuradhapura, where they were received with respect and reverence by the king. After the meal, Mahinda preached the essence of the Buddha's teachings to the royal household. Later, Mahinda addressed two public meetings: first in the hall outside the palace and then in Nandana-garden in the royal park. As a result of his preachings, thousands of men and women took refuge in the Buddha-Dhamma. Then the king Devanampiya Tissa presented the royal park Mahamegha for the residence of Mahinda and other monks. In later times it became the Mahavihara, the earliest centre of Buddhist culture and learning in the Island. At Mihintale, where Ven. Mahinda and the king had met was established another monastery, Cetiyagiri-vihara, which also became a great monastic institution in early Buddhist Ceylon.

When some women expressed desire to join the Sangha, the king of Ceylon and Ven. Mahinda requested Asoka

to send some nuns from India. In response to this request, Asoka sent his daughter, Sanghamitta, along with a group of other nuns, to ordain the women of Sri Lanka. Thus the bhikkhuni Sangha was also established in the Island. Asoka also sent through Sanghamitta a sapling of the Bodhi Tree under which the Lord Buddha had attained Enlightenment. This Bo-sapling was planted in the Mahamegha garden of Anuradhapura and tended with honour and care. It flourishes to this date as one of the most sacred objects of veneration and worship for millions of Buddhists.

Devanampiya Tissa ruled for forty years. Thousands of men and women joined the Buddhist Sangha during his reign. The king built a large number of viharas throughout his kingdom for the residence of monks and nuns and provided them with their requisites. Thus the Buddha-Dhamma was well established in Sri Lanka during his reign. Both Mahinda and Sanghamitta survived the king. They spent nearly 48 years in Sri Lanka. Mahinda lived to the age of 80 years and Sanghamitta to the age of 79 years. King Uttiya, brother and successor of Devanampiya Tissa, performed their funeral with great honour and built stupas over their relics.

Walpola Rahula[91] says, "Mahinda brought to Lanka not only a new religion but also a whole civilization which was then at the height of its glory. He introduced art and architecture into the Island along with sangharamas and cetiyas. He can be regarded as the father of the Sinhalese literature. Buddhaghosha says that Mahinda brought to the Island of the Sinhalese the commentaries of the Tripitaka and put them into Sinhalese for the benefit of the people of the Island. He thus made Sinhalese a literary language and inaugrated its literature".

Since the sons and daughters of the soil had come forward in large numbers to devote their lives to the cause of the Dhamma, no more missionaries went from India to Sri Lanka. An important event, however, took place in the fourth century AD. A sacred tooth relic of the Buddha was in the possession of King Guhasiva of Kalinga. When he was about to be defeated in battle he entrusted it to his daughter Hemamala. Hemamala with her husband Dantakumara took the Sacred tooth to Sri Lanka and handed it over to king Sirimeghavanna at Anuradhapura.[92] Today this tooth Relic of the Buddha is enshrined in the temple of Tooth Relic (Dalada Maligawa)

in Kandy in Sri Lanka.

Kumarajiva

Buddhism was first introduced into China by two Indian monks, Kasyapa Matanga and Dharmarksha, who reached China in AD 67 at the invitation of Emperor Ming of Han dynasty. It is said that they existing sutra of forty-two chapters, an excerpt of the Agamas, was translated by them into Chinese. For their residence the first Buddhist monastery was also built at Loyang, which was then the capital of China. Since the Buddhist scriptures and images of the Buddha were taken to China by the Indian missionaries on a white horse, this monastery was named as the White Horse Monastery. In the following three centuries, a large number of Buddhist monks from Central Asia and India visited China and gave impetus to the spread of Buddhism there. The greatest and the most distinguished of these missionary-monks was Kumarajiva who reached China in AD 383. His life became examplary of missionary activity in China.

According to Kumarajiva's biography, preserved in a Chinese book called Kao-sentchoan[93] compiled in AD 519, his father Kumarayana, came from an illustrious family who exercised the rights of hereditary ministership in an Indian State. Kumarayana, however, renounced his claim to ministership and became a Buddhist monk. Thereafter, he left India and went to Kucha, a small Buddhist Kingdom in Central Asia. The king of that country cordially welcomed him and soon Kumarayana rose to the position of royal precepter. Here Princess Jiva, the king's sister fell in love with him and ultimately married him. The Kuchan Princess bore him a son, who was named as Kumarajiva, which combined the name of his father Kumara and that of his mother Jiva. Kumarajiva was born in AD 344. Soon afterwards, Jiva embraced Buddhism and became a nun. Kumarajiva became a samanera when he was nine years old, his mother took him to Kashmir to give him a thorough grounding in Buddhist literature and philosophy.

In Kashmir, Kumarajiva studied Buddhism under Buddhadatta, who was later converted to the Mahayana faith. In a few years, Kumarajiva acquired great proficiency in all branches of Buddhist learning. After completing his studies, Kumarajiva, with his mother, returned to

Kucha where he was personally welcomed by the king with great respect. In Kucha, he began to live in a new Vihara built for him by the king. There he studied the Vinaya in ten doctrines (of Sarvastivadin) with Vimalaksha, a Buddhist monk of Kashmir, who had travelled to China by the Central Asian route. Soon thereafter hostilities broke out between Kucha and China. The Kuchan forces surrendered and the Chinese general Liu-kuang took a large number of prisoners to China. Kumarajiva was one of them. This happened in AD 383. Kumarajiva remained for nearly fifteen years with the ruler of Ku-tsang in Man-su province. Then in AD 401, on the request of Emperor, Kumarajiva went to the capital of China. There he was cordially welcomed by the Chinese Emperor Yae-Hain, who requested him to propagate Buddhism in his empire.

From then onward till his death in AD 413, Kumarajiva stayed in the Chinese capital and devoted all his energies to translating the Buddhist Sanskrit texts into Chinese and interpreting Buddhist religion and philosophy. According to the Chinese chronicles, Kumarajiva organised a translation bureau to which more than eight hundred monks and scholars were attached. It is said that the king himself, an ardent disciple of the Buddha, held the original texts in his hand as the work of translation proceeded. During the twelve year period (401-412) AD more than 425 volumes were prepared under the supervision of Kumarajiva. Among the Indian monks who helped Kumarajiva in the translation work, mention may be made of Vimalaksha, Kumarajiva's teacher in Kucha, Punyatrata and Dharmaruchi, who went to China in AD 404 at the invitation of Kumarajiva; and Buddhayasha and Sanghabhadra who also went to China some time later.

The work of Kumarajiva heralded a new epoch in the spread and development of Buddhism in China. His influence upon Chinese thought and literature was indeed very great. He educated thousands of Chinese scholars under his guidance. His most important contribution was, however, his introduction of the Madhyamika system of Buddhist philosophy prepounded by Nagarjuna. He is in fact regarded as the first teacher of Madhyamika doctrines in China. The Three Sastra Sect came into being on the basis of three important works of the Madhyamika school, translated by him, namely, the Madhyamika Sastra and the Dvadasanikaya Sastra of Nagarjuna and

the Sata-Sastra of Aryadeva. He also translated the Maha-prajnaparamita-Sastra and also wrote in Chinese the biographies of Nagarjuna and Arya Deva. He also wrote a biography of Asvaghosha. Kumarajiva is also regarded as an expounder of the Satyasiddhi school and the Nirvana school.

Kumarajiva is credited with the translation of 98 works in 425 volumes in Chinese. Out of these 49 works are available according to Nanjio's Catalogue.[94] It is reported that when Kumarajiva was lying on his death-bed, he told his followers and disciples to accept his work and not to look at his life as an ideal one. His last words were; "The lotus grows in the mud, love the lotus and not the mud."

Paramartha

Another great Indian monk who, like Kumarajiva, lived and taught in China for many years was Parmartha of Ujjayini (modern Ujjain) in Madhya Pradesh. After completing his education at Ujjain, Paramartha went to Magadha and settled at Pataliputra. He studied at the famous University of Nalanda and attained proficiency in Buddhist learning. About this time, a Chinese emperor is said to have sent a mission to Magadha to request the king to send a reputable Buddhist monk who could teach Buddhism in China. Paramartha is said to have accompanied the Chinese mission. He travelled by sea and reached Nanking in AD 548. The emperor received him with great honour and requested him to stay in the imperial palace. As requested by the emperor, Paramartha began to translate the Sanskrit texts which he had brought with him from India and laboured continuously for about ten years. Thereafter, he was compelled to wander from place to place on account of political upheaval in China. His last years were therefore spent in solitude. He died in AD 569 at the age of seventy-one.

During his stay in China, Paramartha translated more than 70 Sanskrit works running into 275 volumes[95] in Chinese. As Kumarajiva introduced Nagarjuna to China, Paramartha introduced Vasubandhu to China. The works translated by him include Abhidharmakosa of Vasbandhu. Paramartha also established the Mahayanapsamparigraha-sastra school in China. This school was based upon the Sanskrit texts translated by him. This school survived

for about 80 years and was later absorved by the Dharma-laksana school founded by Hiuen Tsang.

Bodhidharma

Another outstanding Indian missionary who went to China was Bodhidharma, a seer of royal family of Kanchi in South India. On joining the Buddhist Sangha, he was initiated into Buddhism by Prajnatara, a renowned teacher of the Dhyana or meditative form of Buddhism. After his teacher's death, he worked for few years to popularise the Dhyana teachings in India. Later, he left for China in AD 526 for propagating his system of philosophy.

Bodhidharma was cordially welcomed by the emperor Wu-ti, who was a devout Buddhist, at his capital, Nanking. An interesting record of Bodhidharma's first meeting with the Chinese emperor has come down to us. In the course of this discussion,[96] the emperor said, "Since my succession to the throne I have been increasingly establishing temples and so on. How much merit may I expect for that good conduct? The reply came. "None". The emperor asked, "Why none? Bodhidharma answered, "All these things are merely insignificant effects of imperfect cause. It is the shadow following the substance and is without real entity." The emperor said, "Then what is merit in the true sense of the word?" Bodhidharma replied, "It consists in purity and enlightenment, completeness and depth. Merit as such cannot be accumulated by worldly means". The emperor asked, "Which is the most important of the sacred doctrines?" Bodhidharma replied, "Everything is non-substantiality, and there is no such thing as 'sacred'.

Later finding that the emperor was not able to appreciate his mystic trend of philosophy, Bodhidharma left the capital, and went to the Shaolin monastery, near Lo-yang, in North China.

It is said that Bodhidharma sat at the Shao-lin Temple doing pi-kuan, deeply absorved in contemplation with his face to the wall, without interacting with others for nine years.[97] In Chinese, pi means "wall" and kuan means "observation". Thus Bodhidharma is well-known for pi-kuan or "wall meditation" in China. He lays stress on meditation by which alone, he said, "enlightenment should be attained". The meditative school founded by Bodhidharma is known as Ch'an Buddhism in China. The

Ch'an or Dhyana school teaches that we must discard blind acceptance of scriptural authority. It also deprecates the worship of images and priestcraft. According to it, "Buddha is in the heart of man. And Buddha-nature is always pure and bright, illuminating everywhere." The mystic philosophy of Bodhidharma had exercised an abiding spiritual influence among the Chinese, and especially the Japanese Buddhists, where the Ch'an Buddhism became Zen[98] Buddhism (Contemplative Buddhism) with certain modifications.

OTHERS

China

Among other Buddhist monks who poured into China from all parts of India were:- Lokaraksha (AD 147), Dharmapala (AD 207), Dharmakala (AD 222), Vighna (AD 224), and Kalyana (AD 281), Sanghabhuti from Kashmir who reached China in 381 AD. He translated some texts of the Vinaya of the Sarvastivada school; Dharmamitra also from Kashmir who went to China in 424 AD. He translated 12 texts into Chinese. Dharamaksema from Central India who translated 25 texts into Chinese. While returning back to Khotan he is said to have been murdered in the desert in 433 AD; Upasunya from Ujjayini who went to China in 538-539 AD. He translated 6 works into Chinese; Jinagupta from Gandhara who went to China in 559 AD and translated 4 works into Chinese; Dharmagupta from Kanauj who went to China in 610 AD through the Central Asian route. On the way he stayed for one or two years in various Buddhist monasteries in Central Asia; Prabhakaramitra from Central India who went to China in 627 AD and was accompanied by a number of disciples. He translated three texts into Chinese; Atigupta from Central India who went in 652 AD. He translated a number of works into Chinese with the assistance of two monks from Bodh Gaya (Mahabodhi) named Sanghanandamoksha and Kasyapa who were already in China. Some other Buddhist monks who went to China were: Gautama Sanghadeva (C.410 AD), Budhjiva (C.423 AD) from Kashmir; Gunabhadhara (435-468 AD), Dharmakrityasas (481 AD) from Central India; Prajnaruchi (516-543 AD) from Varanasi; Nalandayasas (558 AD) Yasagupta and Vinitaruchi (580 AD) from Central India; and Bodhiruci (seventh century AD) from South India. Bodhiruci, which literally means "intelligence loving" was originally called

Dharmaruchi. His original name Dharmaruci was changed to Bodhiruci by the orders of the empress Wu Tso-thien (AD 684-705). Bodhiruci hailed from South India and went to China during the days of early T'ang dynasty. In China he studied Buddhism under Yasaghosa, a Mahayana Thera, and became well acquainted with the entire Tripitaka within a period of only three years. Budhiruci devoted his entire life to the work of translating Sanskrit texts. During the period AD 693-713, Bodhiruci translated 53 works which ran into 111 volumes in Chinese. He is said to have died in AD 727 when he was in his 156th year.

Central Asia

In the third century BC Asoka despatched Buddhist missionaries to Mesopotamia and Syria in Asia Minor, Egypt in Africa and Macedonia in Europe. About the same time, Buddhism spread to Central Asia--a vast region extending from the eastern shores of the Caspian Sea to the Great Wall of China. The Pamirs divide it into two regions. The western region now belongs to Russia and the eastern region to China. Central Asia is also called Ser-India or the Inner-most Heart of Asia. Buddhism reached the eastern region of Central Asia much before the Christian era and the Indian Buddhists established atleast four important colonies there namely, Kashgar, Kucha, Turfan and Khotan. According to an ancient Khotanese tradition, a son of Asoka named Kustan established his own kingdom in Kucha and its neighbourhood, and that it was his grandson Vijava-Sambhaya who introduced Buddhism into Khotan. A Buddhist scholar from India, named Vairocana was the King's precepter. All the Central Asian Kingdoms were flourshing seats of Buddhism at least up to the seventh century AD and there was a regular flow of Buddhist monks from India to Central Asia. Most of them went further on to China. Thus Central Asia served as a link between India and China.

Burma

Buddhism was introduced into Burma in the third century BC by Sona and Uttara, who were despatched by Asoka to Suvannbhumi (Skt. Suvarnabhumi) to preach the Dhamma there. According to the Burmese tradition,

Buddhaghosha, the great Pali scholar and commentator, of the fifth century AD also visited Burma. He came from Sri Lanka and brought with him a number of Buddhist texts which he translated into Burmese.

Thailand

According to a Thailand tradition, Sona and Uttara were the first apostles of Buddhism in Thailand. The country earlier known as Siam formed part of Suvannabhumi in the third century BC.

Kampuchea

An Indian, Kaundinya is said to have founded a kingdom, known as Funan, in Kampuchea in the fifth century AD. The Funan king, Kaundinya Jayavarman (AD 478-514) is reported to have sent a mission to China under the leadership of a Buddhist monk Nagasena by name. In AD 503, he sent another mission to the Chinese emperor Wu-ti and sent two monks, Sanghapala and Mandrasena to the Chinese court to translate the Buddhist texts. The Buddhist monks of Funan, deputed to China were apparently Indians who had gone to (Kampuchea).

Vietnam

Buddhism reached Vietnam (also known as Campa) from China but it was developed there primarily by an Indian monk. Vinitaruchi, who reached Vietnam in AD 580. He is known as the patriarch of the Dhyana sect in Vietnam.

Indonesia

Buddhism was introduced into Java by Prince Gunavarman of Kashmir who had become a Buddhist monk. He visited the island and converted the Brahman king and his family to the Buddhist faith in the fifth century AD. Java became a stronghold of Buddhism. Buddhism was also introduced about the same time in the island of Sumatra, particularly in the kingdom of Sri-vijaya. The available inscriptions reveal that the king who ruled Sri-vijaya in the years 683-684 was a devout Buddhist. I-tsing who visited Sri-vijaya in the seventh century AD says that the Buddhist monks in Sri-vijaya numbered more than thousand and they all study all the subjects which are studied in the Madhyadesa (India). Dharmapala, the famous professor of Nalanda, and Vajrabodhi, a monk from south India, also visited Indonesia or Survarnadvipa, as the country was then known, in the seventh century AD.

Korea

Buddhism reached Korea in AD 372 when a Chinese monk named Sundo reached Kaguryu, the northern kingdom. A dozen years later, in AD 384, an Indian monk, Marananda or Mallananda reached the neighbouring kingdom of Paekche and propagated the Dhamma. In the third Korean kingdom, Silla, Buddhism came to be accepted only in AD 528. Thereafter, Buddhism spread all over Korea.

Japan

From Korea, Buddhism reached Japan in AD 552. The Dhyana school introduced from India by Bodhidharma, which had become Ch'an or Ch'en in China, became Zen in Japan. The Three-sastra-sect, based upon the translation by Kumarajiva of three important works of the Madhyamika school, namely, the Madhyamika-Sastra, the Sata-Sastra and the Dvadasnikaya-Sastra was also transplanted in Japan, and known as Sanron.

Tibet

Though Buddhism was first introduced into Tibet in the fourth century AD yet it was only in the seventh century that it gained roots there through the strenuous efforts of the King Stron-btsan-sgam-pa who ruled from 620-650 AD. At that time, no writing existed in Tibet. The King deputed his Minister and linguistic genious, Thommi Sambhota, to India to study the art of writing. He reached Nalanda University and studied Sanskrit, Buddhist philosophy and literature. On return of Tibet, he designed Tibetan alphabets. On the basis of the Indian script. From then onward all literature in Tibet was translated and written down in this script.

POPULAR CULT

INSCRIPTIONAL EVIDENCE

The popularity and vitality of the Buddhist religion during the glorious period is clearly established by the inscriptional evidence that has come to light throughout the country. Here we will confine our attention to the three Great Stupas at Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh, Bharhut and Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh; and Buddhist Caves in Maharashtra, where the largest number of inscriptions have been discovered.

Amaravati

Of all the Buddhist shrines in ancient Andhra, the Maha-chaitya at Amaravati, 32 km from Guntur, on the bank of the river Krishna, was the most sacred as well as the most magnificent. Built by Asoka in the third century BC, initially it was a modest stupa enclosed by a granite railing. During the reign of the Satavahana Kings, who made the nearby Dhenukakata their capital, the Amaravati Stupa was enlarged in the second century AD and surrounded by a new highly ornamental marble railing carved with beautiful reliefs and elegant designs.

The largest collection of Amaravati sculptures is at present in the Government Museum, Madras. These sculptures cover a period of over 450 years from about 200 BC to 250 AD. 126 inscriptions[99] found on these sculptures speak volumes of the missionary spirit of the early Buddhists. The donors are from all walks of life and from many regions of the country. The inscriptions mention monks (bhadata), elders (thera), mendicants (pendadapatika), worthy men (aya), lay worshippers male and female (uvasaka and uvasika), disciples male and female (atevasika and atevasikini), preachers of the law (dhamakathika), supervisors of renovation works (navakamaka), householders (gahapati), housewives (gharani), generals (senagopa), perfumers (gadhika), leather-workers (camakara), whole towns (negama), and many others. The names of the donors also reflect in an ample measure the influence of Buddhism on the lives of the people. The names particularly derived from the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha are: Bodhi, Bodhika, Buddha

(3), Budharajida (2), Buddharakhita (4), Buddhi (8), Buddhila (2), Dhama, Dhamadina, Dhamarakhita, Dhamasarayana, Dhamasiria, Dhamila, Sanghata, Sanghamita, Sangharakhshita, Sangharakhita, Sanghada. Other Buddhistic names are: Ananda, Bala, Mahadhamakadhika, Makabuddhia, Nagabudhia, Nagasena, Rahula, and Sidhatha (Sidhartha).

Most of the inscriptions at Amaravati open with the auspicious words "Sidham" (Success), and some of them after this begin with "Adoration to the Lord; the illuminator (lit. Sun) of the world" (namo bhagavato logaticasa) or "Adoration to the Lord Buddha, the best of all beings" (namo bhagavato savasatutamasa Budasa). The gifts are invariably termed as "suciya dana" (Pious gift) or "deyadhamma" (Meritorious gift). Many donors dedicate their gifts (danam) to their kith and kin while some dedications are "for the welfare and happiness of the whole world" (ca lokasa hitasukhathataya). An inscription says; "At the foot of the great caitya of the Lord has been placed a lamp pillar, as seat of merit" (bhagavato mahacetiya padamale apano dhamathana divakhabo patithavito).

Bharhut

One of the earliest Buddhist monuments to be built in Central India was at Bharhut, which was a flourishing city in the third century BC. The ancient city is now represented by the village of Bharhut which is 15 km south of Satna railway station in Madhya Pradesh. Bharhut is 450 km from Sanchi.

Sir Alexander Cunningham, who salvaged in 1873-74 of whatever little had escaped the destruction and spoilation of the rich heritage of Bharhut, has listed as many as 140 inscriptions[100] on the coping stones, pillars and the railing of the Stupa. Of these, barring two royal inscriptions-- one by Raja Dhanabhuti, the Buddhist king of Sugana, modern Sugh in Haryana, and the other by Prince Vadha Pala, his son--all the inscriptions are by the pious Buddhists: monks, nuns, and the lay men and women.

The inscriptions at Bharhut are rather brief. Majority of them merely say 'danam' or 'gift' of so and so. For instance, "Aya Nagadevasa danam" or "Gift of the reverend Naga Deva." Some inscriptions specify the object also as "Dhama Gutasa danam thabo" or "Pillar-gift of Dharma Gupta", and "Silasa Suchi danam" or "Rail-gift

of Sinha". Some donors also add the village or city from which they hailed. About a dozen villages or towns around Bharhut figure in the inscriptions. The donors from far off places who figure at Bharhut are from Kosambi in U.P., Nasik in Maharashtra, Pataliputra in Bihar and Vedisa in Madhya Pradesh. Atleast 25 monks and nuns appear as donors at Bharhut. Among the lay donors, the Buddhistic names like Buddha Rakshita, Bodhi-rakshita, Dharma Gupta, Dharma Rakshita, Deva Rakshita, Isi Rakshita, Tabut Rakshita, Sanghila and Sangha Rakshita are prominent.

Sanchi

The Great Stupa at Sanchi, about 9 kilometres South-West of Vedisa, was initially built by Asoka in the third century BC. It was extensively damaged by the opponents of Buddhism following the break-up of the Mauryan Empire in BC 185. However, it was soon rebuilt by the devout Buddhists of Vedisa, and others in the country.

The elaborately-carved four gateways (torana) were added by the pious devotees in the first century BC. As the inscriptions reveal, top architrave of the South Gateway was the gift of one Ananda, who was the foreman of the artisans of King Satakarni, an early member, of the Satavahana dynasty. The south pillar of the West Gateway and the middle architrave of the South Gateway were the gift of the same person, one Balamitra, the pupil of Aya-Chuda. One Nagapidya, a native of Kurara, was the donor of both the south pillar of the East Gateway and the north pillar of the West Gateway.

Over 190 inscriptions[101] discovered at Sanchi, and listed by Cunningham, reveal that the donors were from all walks of life. They included a Ghapati or householder, Sethi (or Setha) or banker or alderman, Vanika or merchant or trader, Rajalipikars or royal scribe, Rajuka or surveyor or revenue-settlement officer, Sotika or weaver, Kamika or artisan or humble workman, Asvarik or trooper, Pavarika or cloak-seller, Vadika or carpenter, Avesin or foremen of artisans, and Lekhakasa or professional writer. In a number of cases, the gifts were made by monks and nuns. In several instances, the donors are referred to as pupils of particular teachers. "Sometimes, some women are named as the mothers of particular monks, and nuns; sometimes they proudly associate the names

of their sons with their own. Among the epithets given to women worshippers, the repeated occurrence of old Pali title 'Pajavati' literally', 'a mother of children' is quite significant".

There are a number of instances where subscriptions were raised by particular families or cummunities or associates or guilds or inhabitants of a particular place. For example,[102] "a gift was made by Bodha-gothi (Baudha goshthi), i.e. Buddhist assembly or committee of Dharmavardhana, and by the gothi of Barulamises of Vedisa. The workers in ivory (Dantakaras) of Vedisa also made a joint gift. This collective gift, probably, indicates that these artisans formed a guild or sreni such as the Nasik inscriptions mention repeatedly. The lay-worshipers of Kamtakanuja also record a joint donation. The nuns of Modaachikada are known to have made joint donations." Further, "the gifts of villages, i.e. Asvati, Morajabhikata, Cudamoragiri, Vejaja, and Padukulika, are also recorded. Pious donations, made by villages or towns recorded on the Sanchi stupas possess a particular interest, for though perhaps, they do not prove that all the inhabitants of these villages were upasakas of the Buddhist Sangha, they, yet, indicate that their most influential men, or the arbitrators for that matter belonged to the Buddhist sect."

Finally, "from the names of the donors mentioned in the inscriptions at Sanchi, it is clear that either they themselves or their ancestors were originally the followers of different religions. For example, people like Agisima (Angnisoma), Agido (de) va, Bahadata (Brahamadatta) Mahida, Mita, Vesamanadata, Visvadeva, Yamarakhita, originally believed in Vedic worship, but adopted Buddhism. Similarly, Naga, Nagila, Nagadata, originally the believers of snake-cult, embraced it. Votaries of the Vaishnava faith like Vinutaka (Virhuka), Upidata or Opedadata (Upendradatta), Revatimitra became its followers. The people named Samika, Samika (Svamika, Svemika), Himadata of the Saiva persuasion pursued Buddhism. People like Yakhadasi, Yakhadina, belonging, originally, to Yaksha cult also adopted it."

Buddhist Caves in Maharashtra

The hilly tracts of Maharashtra have preserved for us nearly 700 Buddhist caves. Majority of these caves

were excavated during the Satavahana period (BC 200-AC 200). The second phase of excavation of Buddhist caves in Maharashtra began in the fifth century AD with the Mahayana resurgence and continued up to the seventh century AD. Over 200 inscriptions[103] have been found in these caves. The number of caves and inscriptions therein (figures in brackets) at various places are as follows: Ajanta - 30 (24), Aurangabad -12 (Nil), Bedsa - 12 (3), Bhaja - 22 (8), Ellora - 12 (Nil), Ghatotkach - 3(1), Junnar - 140 (34), Kanheri - 109 (51), Karle - 6 (23), Karad - 66 (1), Kol - 7 (3) Kondane - 16 (1), Kondivite - 18 (1), Kuda - 25 (30), Mahad - 31 (3), Nadsur - 19 (2), Nenanvli - 37 (Nil), Nasik - 23 (27), Pitalkhora - 13 (7), Shirwal - 15 (Nil) Shelarwadi - 6 (2), Thanale - 23 (Nil), and Wai - 9 (Nil).

Majority of the inscriptions are of the early Buddhists of the period BC second century to AD second century. The inscriptions of the Mahayana period (fifth-seventh centuries AD) are at Ajanta, Ghatotakach and Pitalkhora. There are hardly any inscriptions of the later Vajrayana period, the last phase of Buddhism in Maharashtra.

While royal patronage was there, a large number of donors were the individuals from all walks of life, as well as monks and nuns. The lay Buddhists included bankers, merchants, goldsmiths, jewellers, blacksmiths, gardners, flower-vendors, perfumers, weavers, carpenters, bamboo-workers and farmers. The donors were generally the local lay Buddhists. In some cases, the donors were from far off places. The inscriptions reveal the names of donors from Nasik at Bedsa and Kanheri; from Kalyan at Junnar and Kanheri; from Sopara at Kanheri and Karle; from Chaul at Kanheri; from Karad at Kuda; and from Paithan at Pitalkhora. The donors from outside Maharashtra figuring in the inscriptions are from Broach (Gujarat) at Junnar; from Vaijayanti (Karnataka) at Karle; and from Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh) at Karle, Kanheri, Pitalkhora and Shelarwadi. All these people were apparently Buddhist traders and merchants.

Let us now go round the State and see where the Buddhist faith moved mountains and who were the donors of so many cave temples in Maharashtra.

The Ajanta Caves have 24 inscriptions.[104] Of these, 15 are painted inscriptions. The painted inscriptions are in cave Nos. 9(5), 10 (8) and 16 (2). The inscriptions of the early period second century BC are in caves 10 and 12. These inscriptions tell us that the lattice work and the lower facade of cave 10 were the gift of a Vasithiputa while cave 12 was a gift of Ghanamadada, a merchant.

The inscriptions of the Mahayana period reveal that the Ajanta establishment had no doubt the royal patronage of the Vakataka Kings and their ministers but Buddhist monks were also prominent among the donors. An inscriptions in cave No. 16 records the dedication of a cave by Varahadeva, a minister of the last Vakataka King, Harisena (circa AD 475-500). Another inscription in cave 17 records the gifts of Hastibhoja, a minister of the Vakataka King, Devasena.

An inscription in cave 26 tells us:

"The ascetic Sthavira Achala, who glorified the faith and was grateful, caused to be built a mountain dwelling (sailagriha) for the Teacher, though his desires were fulfilled."[105]

Another donor monk at Ajanta was Buddhabhadra. The supervision of the cave was done by his disciple monks, Dharmadata and Bhadrabandhu. In the inscription he says:

"In honour of that Bhavaviraja and of his own parents, the monk Buddhabhadra has caused a temple of Sugata to be erected..... May the merit which in this work procure for those three (Bhavaviraja and his parents), and the world, the reward of mahabodhi which is filled with all spotless qualities".[106]

Two beautiful inscriptions at Ajanta in cave Nos. 20 and 16 respectively read as under:

"Victory to him who pays attention and strives for the welfare of the people, who destroys.... comforts, who knows the highest aim (of men) in whom all the three fold spotless qualities have been developed, (who has freed men from fear) and who sheds the spotless radiance of mercy".[107]

"As long as (the earth rests) on the.... folds of the serpent (and) the sun shines with rays yellow like red arsenic, so long may this pure (cave XVI) which internally contains a gem like hall, and which was made for the sake of the three gems (Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha) be enjoyed".[108]

Three inscriptions[109] at Bedsa tell us that the donors of these caves were a Pushyanaka, son of Seth Ananda from Nasik, Samadinika, daughter of a Mahabhoja, a Mandavi Maharathini, the wife of Apadevanaka; and a

monk Aslhamita, pupil of the monk Gobhuti who lived on the same hill (Marakuda hill). There are eight inscriptions[110] at Bhaja. The primary donors of the Bhaja caves were a Naga Nadasava of Bhogavati; and Maharathi Vinudata, son of Kosiki. One cave was the gift of Badha, the ploughman's wife.

At Ghatotkach, about 18 km to the West of Ajanta, near the village of Jinjala, there are three Buddhist caves-- one Chaitya and two Viharas. These caves were excavated in the sixth century AD. There is only one inscription here which refers to Hastibhoja, a minister of Vakataka king--Devasena, who is also referred to in an Ajanta inscription. It begins with a salutation to the Buddha like this:

"Glory to him, who is called Buddha, the ascetic among ascetics, the immortal among immortals, the teacher among teachers, the best among the good, a store of marvels, to Him who obtained (supreme) wisdom by abstaining from fruition."

"Next (glory to) the Law (Dhamma) which has been promulgated by Him who knows the Law, then (glory to) the community (Sangha) the best of communities, placed in which, as in a beautiful vessel, even those who have sinned by committing murder, become exalted."[111]

Out of 34 inscriptions[112] at Junnar, only one inscription in a Vihara is by a minister of the Kshatrapa ruler, Nahapana. Majority of the remaining inscriptions are from the lay Buddhists from Junnar and the surrounding villages.

The lay donors from Junnar and the surrounding villages were: Ugaha and his wife Isipalita; Ananda, his father Tapasa, and grandfather Kapila; Sivabhuti, son of Samada; Samada, Budhamita and Buddharakhita, Lachinika, wife of Nadaka Tarika; Nadabalika, wife of Isimulasamin; Patibadhaka Giribhuti, Sakhayaru, son of Savagiriyasa; Sivapalitanika, wife of Giribhuti, Palapa, Vahata, Vacheduka, Sivadasa, son of Sayiti; Sivabhuti, son of Ayama of Vacha Gota. The Apaguriya family had made specific endowments for the Dharmottariyas who were strong at Junnar. Some of the donations came from the merchants from Bharukaccha (Broach), Kalyan and others passing through the narrow Nanaghat pass.

Some of the donations by the pious devotees were in the form of land for growing of trees whose income was to be used for meeting the cost of food and clothing

of the monks and nuns. Some cash donations were also invested as 'Fixed Deposits' with the guilds so that interest thereon could be used for meeting the needs of the monks.

An interesting inscription in the Chaitya cave No. 51 at Shivneri says: "The meritorious gift of Virasenaka, a Chief house holder and upright merchant, a Chaityagriha dedicated for the welfare and happiness of the whole world".[113]

An inscription in the Chaityagriha cave No. 6 in the Genesha Lena group tells us: "A Chaityagriha dedicated as meritorious gift by the distinguished Sulasadata, son of Hairanyaka of Kalyan".[114]

51 inscriptions[115] in the Kanheri caves near Bombay reveal that largely the donors were from the cities of Kalayan[116] (7) Sopara[117] (2), Chaul[118] (2) and Nasik[119] (1) in Maharashtra. There was one donor from Dhenukakata[120] (Amaravati) in Andhra Pradesh also. The lay devotees from Kalyan were Swamidata, a goldsmith, the merchant Dharma, son of Shivamitra, together with Budhaka and his family, a son of the merchant Vishnuandin; a nun Damila, and Nanda, a blacksmith. The donors who hailed from Sopara were Swamika, a merchant Nagapalita, a jeweller, and the preacher Swatimitra. Among other donors were Nakanaka; Gajasena and Gajamita, Khadarki; Sivapalatanika; Satareka; Samika; Sulasadata; son of Rohanamita; Isipala, son of Golanaka; Aparenu, son of Nanda; Nada, Nagamalanika, a Maharathini; Nandanika, and Nana. Among these donors were five merchants, two treasures, one jeweller, one physician, one goldsmith, one blacksmith, two from royal family, four Buddhist monks and three nuns.

In the inscriptions at Kanheri some names of the resident monks[121] have also been preserved. They are Achala; Bodhika; another Bodhika, disciple of Utra Semula; Gahala; Kanha; Mitrabhuti Dharmapala; Vijayamita Ananda; and the nuns Gajasena; Gajamita; Nalanaka; and Samidata. The Aparashaila and Dharmottariya sects are also referred to in the Kanheri inscriptions.

One of the inscriptions at Kanheri is about the establishment of a Vihara at Kalyan, a flourishing market town in those days. The donor says[122] that he has made the gift of a vihara with two apartments and a quadrangular dining hall (bhojanachatusala) in the vihara at Kalyan in the Gandharikabhami and an endowment for those

of a house in Mukadasivayiva. Yet another inscription at Kanheri refers to pious donations by a devotee to an Ambalika Vihara at Kalyan.[123]

There are 23 inscriptions[124] in the Karla caves, Majority of the inscriptions are in the largest Chaitya shrine which was got excavated by one Bhutapala, a merchant from Vaijayanti, a town said to be on the banks of the river Varada in North Kanara (Karnataka). The inscription says:[125] "Seth Bhutapala from Vaijayanti has established a rock mansion--the most excellent in Jambudvipa (India)".

According to the inscriptions, the pillars of this excellent Chaitya were donated by Maharathi Agnimitranaka, son of Goti; the preacher Satimita of the Dharmottariyas from Sopara; Sihadhaya, a Yavana from Dhenukakata (Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh); and Dhamma, also from Amaravati. Donors of other parts were Sihadata, perfumer; Bhayila, mother of Mahadevanaka; Simila, son of Venuvasa; and Sigutanika, wife of Usabhanaka. Other donors were a monk Buddharakhita and a nun Kodi, mother of Bhunika.

The Karle establishment was originally the result of 'danam' by the local Buddhist devotees led by Maharathi Somadeva of the Okhalakhiyas. The gift of land by Somadeva is also recorded. Usavadata, son-in-law of Nahapana had also assigned lands for the proper maintenance of the Buddhist caves at Karle.

That the Mahasanghikas were strong at Karle is evident from two inscriptions[126] here, one recording the gift of the village Karajaka by Gautamiputra Satakarni to the monks of Valuraka (Verul) caves for the support of this sect; and the other of the time of Vasistiputra Siri Pulumayi recording the gift of a nine-celled hall to the Mahasanghikas.

66 caves, near the town of Karad, have only one inscription.[127] It refers to the gift of a cave by Sanghamitra, son of Gopala. There are three inscriptions[128] in the caves at Kol, a village to the South-East of Mahad. The donors of these caves were Sivadata; Dhamasiri, his wife; and Sangharakhita, son of Gahapati, of the village of Aghatakarsha. Another donor was a banker. Kondane caves, 33 km North of Lonavla, have only one inscription.[129] The donor was Balukena or Balaka, the pupil of Kanha. The Kondivite caves, also known as Mahakali caves, near Bombay, have also only one inscription.[130] The donor was an upasaka of Gautam gotra.

There are 25 caves at Kuda, a small village on the Eastern side of the Northern arm of the Murud-Janjira creek in South Konkan. The Kuda caves have as many as 30 inscriptions.[131] One of the distinguished donors at Kuda was the family of Sulasadata in the service of the Mahabhoja Skandapalita. Two other Mahabhoja donors were Mamdava Khandapalita, son of the Mahabhoja Sadgeri Vijaya; and Vijayanika, daughter of the Mahabhoja Sadakara Sudamasana. Among other donors were: a banker, an iron-monger, a gardener, a writer, a physician, a flower-vendor, a minister, and Buddhist monks and nuns. An inscription says: "This is the meritorious gift of the Sakya mendicant (Bhikshu).... may the merit of it be for the attainment of the supreme knowledge, first by his father and mother, and then by the whole sentient world".[132]

Of the 27 inscriptions[133] at Nasik, the royal inscriptions in cave No. 8, 3 and 15 of Nahapana, Gautamiputra and Sriyajna Satakarni dated about AD 100, 130 and 180 respectively are the most important historical epigraphs of the Satavahana period.

The first Satavahana inscription at Nasik refers to the reign of Krishna, the second Satavahana king who ruled in the second century BC. Later, the Nasik-Karle region was conquered by the Kshahartas in the first century AD. Usavadata, son of Dinika and son-in-law of Mahakshatrapa Nahapana, who became governor of Nasik during this period proved to be a great benefactor of the Buddhist community at Nasik. A number of inscriptions[134] by him in cave 8 at Nasik tell us about the excavation of new caves as well as gifts made by him and his family to the Bhikkhu Sangha.

The Nasik-Karle region was reconquered by the 23rd Satavahana king, Gautamiputra Siri Satakarni sometime during AD 106-130. Queen Gotami Balasiri, mother of king Gautamiputra Satakarni, in grateful thanks to the Buddha, showered gifts on the Buddhist community at Nasik. The inscriptions[135] in cave 3 of Gautamiputra Satakarni, his mother Queen Balasiri and of his successor son, Vasistiputra Siri Pulumayi, give ample evidence of the royal support. The inscriptions of the last powerful Satavahana King, Yajnasri Satakarni (AD 166-196) are also available at Nasik in cave No.15.

The inscriptions further reveal that the people of Nasik and the surrounding villages were also deeply attached to the Buddhist monks living in the Nasik caves.

A number of donors from the town of Nasik and the surrounding villages figure in the inscriptions.[136] An inscription in cave 10 says, "a merchant deposited money in the hands of the town people to provide a garment for the ascetics living here during rains (vasa)".

Three inscriptions[137] at Mahad which is 205 km South of Bombay on the Bombay-Goa Road, refer to the gifts of a Prince Krishnabhoja Vishnupalita; and Vadsiri, a banker's wife. There is also an endowment of a farm for the use of Sangha. There are two inscriptions[138] in the caves at Nadsur, a village to the North-East of Mahad. The donors of these caves were: a Godata, son of Shivagonaka; Mita, Sagharakhita, and Thupasakha.

Pitalkhora caves, which are 78 km from Aurangabad on the road to Chalisgaon, have seven inscriptions.[139] The donors of these caves were the sons of Sanghaka from Paithan, the family of the perfumer Mitradeva from Paithan; Mrigha, son of Vachi; a royal physician, his daughter Datta and son Dattaka; and Krishna, son of Samasa from Dhenukakata (Amaravati) in Andhra Pradesh.

The caves at Shelarwadi, 24 km North-West of Pune, have two inscriptions. The first one[140] refers to the gift of a cave by a Simhagupta, wife of the farmer and householder Rishabha of Dhenukakata (Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh) together with her son Nanda. The second[141] inscription is regarding dedication of a Chaityagriha by the nun Ghopaki, daughter of Sagha and disciple of venerable Simha.

How far Buddhism was popular during the period covered by the inscriptional evidence is also clear from the views expressed by Sir R.G. Bhandarkar. He says, 141-A "The period that we have been speaking of (that is from the beginning of second century BC to the fourth century AD) has left no trace of a building or sculpture devoted to the use of Brahmin religion. Of course, Brahmanism existed and it was probably, during this period, being developed into the form which it assumed in later time. But the religion certainly does not occupy the prominent position, and Buddhism was followed by the large mass of the people from princes to the humble workman".

Fa-hian's Testimony

How far was popular the religion of the Buddha can also be judged from the records left for us by the first Chinese monk and pilgrim, Fa-hian, who left China in AD 399 in search of real Buddhism and practically walked all the way from Central China across the Gobi desert, over the Hindu Kush and entered India via Afghanistan in AD 406. At Bannu he saw three thousand Bhikkhus of the Theravada school. In Peshawar, Fa-hian saw the grand pagoda built by Kanishka. He says about it:" Of all the pagodas and temples seen by the pilgrims, not one could compare with this in grandeur and dignity, and tradition says that of the various pagodas in the inhabited world this one takes the highest rank". From Peshawar, Fa-hian marched forward and after crossing the Indus River he entered Punjab. He writes:[142]

"Across the river the pilgrims were in a country called Bhida (in the Punjab), where the Faith is very flourishing under both the Greater and Lesser Vehicles. When the people of the country saw Buddhist priests from China coming among them, they were much affected and said, "How is it possible for foreigners to know that renunciation of family is the essence of our religion, and to travel afar in search of the Faith?" Then they gave to the pilgrims whatsoever they required, and treated them in accordance with the Faith."

Crossing the Punjab, where he saw" many monasteries with nearly ten thousand monks", Fa-hian reached Mathura. Here he found twenty monasteries, with some three thousand monks, on the banks of the river Jamuna. He says:[143] "The Faith is becoming here very popular; and all the kings of the countries to the West of the desert are firm believers. When they make offerings to the priests, they take off their caps of the State, and together with their families and officials of the Court, wait personally upon the priests at table. At the end of the meal, they spread carpets on the ground, and sit down facing the president not venturing to sit on couches in the presence of the priests".

Giving glimpses of the monastic life, Fa-hian says:[144] "The priests occupy themselves with benevolent ministrations, and with chanting liturgies; or sit in meditation. When travelling priests arrive, the old resident priests go out to welcome them and carry for them their clothes and alms-bowls, giving them water for washing and oil for anointing their feet, as well as the liquid food allowed out of hours. By and by, when the travellers have rested,

the priests ask them how long they have been priests and what is their standing; and then each traveller is provided with a room and bedroom requisites, in accordance with the rules of the Faith".

Fa-hian further says:"[145] Nuns mostly make offerings at the pagoda of Ananda, because it was he who begged the World-Honoured One to allow women to become nuns. Novices of both sexes chiefly make their offerings to Rahula (son of Buddha). Teachers of the Abhidharma make their offerings in honour thereof, and teachers of the Vinaya in honour of the Vinaya; there being one such function every year, and each denomination having its own particular day. When the priests have received their annual titles, the elders, gentry, and others, bring each one, various articles of clothing and things of which Shamans stand in need, and distribute them among the priests, who also make presents to one another".

Thereafter, Fa-hian visited in succession Sankasya (Kapitha), Kanauj, Ayodhya, Sravasti, Kapilavastu, Kushinagar, Vaisali, Pataliputra, Rajagrha, Nalanda, Sarnath and Kausambi. All these places were at that time centres of Buddhism. At Sankasya (Sankisa), Fa-hian saw about 1700 monks and nuns; at Kanauj (Kanyakubja) there were two monasteries; At Sravasti, Fa-hian saw stupas, some in ruins, at the various places sanctified by the Buddha. At Jetavana, he was welcomed by the monks with great wonder. There he saw the monastery built by Anathapindaka" with the door facing east, and on each side a stone pillar; that on the left having at its top the figure of a wheel, and that on the right a similarly placed figure of an ox." He adds,[146] "the water in the ponds was clear, the trees luxuriant in foliage, with flowers of various hues, truly so beautiful to behold that it was named the Shrine of the Garden of Gold." At Kushinagar, he found "the inhabitants few and scattered, and only such as connected with the priesthood." At Vaisali, Fa-hian saw a number of pagodas[147] built on the spots sanctified by the Buddha. He also saw a pagoda built at the place where the second Buddhist Council was held after about 100 years of the Maha-parinirvana of the Buddha.

From Vaisali, Fa-hian came to Pataliputra where he saw 'Asoka's palace, with its various halls, still in existence' and many monasteries. He says; "By the side of king Asoka's pagoda, a monastery under the Great Vehicle was built, very imposing in appearance; and also

one under the Lesser Vehicle, the two together containing six to seven hundred priests, grave and decorous, each in his proper place,-- a striking sight".[148] Fa-hian has high praise for Magadha and its people. He says:[149] "Of all the countries of Central India, this has the largest cities and towns. Its people are rich and thriving and emulate one another in practising charity of heart and duty to one's neighbour. Regularly every year, on the eighth day of the second moon, they make a four-wheeled car of five storeys by lashing together bamboos, and these storeys are supported by posts in the form of crescent-bladed halberds. The car is over twenty feet in height, and in form like a pagoda; and it is draped with a kind of white cashmire, which is painted in various colours. They make images of devas, ornamented with gold, silver, and strass, and with silk banners and conopies over-head. At the four sides they make niches, each with a Buddha sitting inside and a Bodhisattva in attendance. There may be some twenty cars, all beautifully ornamented and different from one another. On the above mentioned day all the ecclesiastics and laymen in the district assemble; they have singing and high-class music, all make offerings of flowers and incense."

At Rajagriha, Fa-hian saw the famous Venuvana monastery with resident monks as well as another monastery and a number of stupas raised by the devotees on the various spots associated with the Buddha. Then Fa-hian went to Bodh Gaya. He Writes: "Where Buddha attained to Buddhaship, there are three monasteries, each with resident priests, who receive offerings in abundance from the populace, without the least stint. The strictness with which, while Buddha was still in the world, the holy brotherhood observed their vows and disciplinary regulations, and the gravity of their deportment when sitting, rising or entering an assembly, persist down to the present[150] day."

From Bodh Gaya, Fa-hian came to Sarnath. He says: "There are two monasteries in the deer forest, both with resident monks." He adds[151], "Pagodas have been raised at all the following places: where the five men, upon Buddha's arrival got up and saluted him, where, sixty paces to the North, Buddha sat facing the east and began to preach the Faith and gave salavation to Kaundinya and the others, five in all;...." Then Fa-hian went to Kausambi. He says:[152] "There is a shrine there, known

as the Garden of Ghochiravana (the Ghostiarama) in which Buddha once dwelt and where there are still priests mostly of the Lesser Vehicle."

From Benaras (Varanasi), Fa-hian went back to Patali-putra and spent three years in learning Pali and Sanskrit and copying out Buddhist Texts; which he later took with him to China. Thereafter, he travelled to Tamluk, a sea-port on the mouth of the Hooghly, and stayed there for two years, copying out sutras and drawing pictures of images. "In this country", he says,[153] "there are twenty-four monasteries, all with resident priests, and the Buddhist Faith is very flourishing."

From Tamluk, Fa-hian sailed in AD 411 for Sri Lanka and then returned to China by sea in AD 414.

Hiuen Tsang's Survey

Hiuen Tsang, the celebrated second Chinese pilgrim who came to India after about 230 years of Fa-hian, was a very keen observer and has left for us the most valuable record of India in general, and Buddhism in particular, the religion to which he belonged. Hiuen Tsang left China in AD 629, at the age of 26, and took the same route to India as Fa-hian had done, across the Central Asia, the Gobi desert and the Hindu Kush mountains. As he had been refused permission by the Chinese Emperor to leave China, he travelled secretly within China, hiding by day and travelling by night. When he crossed over to Turfan, the first kingdom in Central Asia, Hiuen Tsang was welcomed by the king, who was a devout Buddhist. The Turfan king, after vainly trying to keep Hiuen Tsang in his territory, provided him with an escort for his further journey. From Turfan, Hiuen Tsang proceeded further, and after crossing the Hindu Kush reached Bamiyan in Afghanistan. At that time, almost the whole of Central Asia was Buddhist and Hiuen Tsang saw hundreds of monasteries with thousands of monks in Turfan, Kara-shahr (Kashgar), Kucha and Bactria. At Bamiyan, he saw ten monasteries with about 1000 monks. He also saw the two colossal statues of the Buddha carved out of the mountain. In Kapisa, he saw about 100 monasteries and some 6000 monks. From Bamiyan, Hiuen Tsang came, after the summer of AD 630 to Nagarahara, modern Jalalabad, in Afghanistan. From here, he begins his account of India. From Nagarahara, Hiuen Tsang reached Peshawar[154]

(Purashupura), the capital of Gandhara, where he saw "about 1000 sangharamas which were deserted and in ruins". The Great Stupa of Kanishka was, however, still standing and the pilgrim gives a vivid account of the same. According to him, there were 18000 Buddhist monks in Udayana[155] (the Swat Valley) and 10000 monks in Sind.[156] At Takshashila (Taxila), however, he saw "many monasteries in ruins with very few monks."[157]

From Taxila, Hiuen Tsang reached Kashmir in May-June 631 and stayed there for two years before proceeding to Jalandhar in Punjab. Given below is a brief survey[158] of the Buddhist monks and monasteries seen by Hiuen Tsang during his travels from Kashmir to Kanyakumari during the period from AD 631 to 643.

S. No.	*Country/ Place*	*Monas-teries*	*Monks*	*School/ Sect.*
(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*	*(5)*
1.	Kashmir	100	5000	Mixed Hinayana-Mahayana
2.	Sakala (modern Sialkot)	1	100	Hinayana
3.	Chinapati (modern Patti in Amritsar distt., Punjab)	10	No figure	
4.	Tamsavana monastery (modern Sultanpur in the Kulu Valley)	1	300	Sarvastivada
5.	Jalandhara (modern Jalandhar in Punjab)	50	2000	Mixed
6.	Kuluta (modern Kulu in Himachal Pradesh)	20	1000	Mixed
7.	Satadru (modern Sanghol near Sirhind)	10	Few	-
8.	Srughna (modern Sugh in Haryana)	5	1000	Hinayana

Contd.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
9.	Sthanesvara (modern Thanesar in Haryana)	3	700	Hinayana
10.	Pariyatra (modern Bairat in Rajasthan)	8	Few	Hinayana
11.	Mathura (in U.P.)	20	2000	Mixed
12.	Matipura (a small town between the Ganges and the Ramganga river)	8	800	Sarvastivada
13.	Brahmapura (near Matipura)	5	Few	-
14.	Govisana (it corresponded to the modern districts of Kashipur, Rampur and Pilibhit in U.P.)	10	100	Hinayana
15.	Ahicchatra (near Ramgarh in Rohilkhand)	10	1000	Sammitiya
16.	Virasana (Bhilasana to the north of Etah)	2	300	Mahayana
17.	Kapitha (Sankasya in U.P.)	4	1000	Sammitiya
18.	Kanauj	100	10000	Mixed
19.	Navadevakula (modern Nohbatganj on the eastern bank of the Ganges)	3	500	Sarvastivada
20.	Ayodhya	100	3000	Mixed
21.	Hayamukha (north of Ayodhya across the Ganges)	5	1000	Sammitiya
22.	Prayag (Allahabad)	2	Few	

Contd.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
23.	Kausambi (Kosam near Allahabad)	10	300	Hinayana
24.	Visakha (Saketa)	20	3000	Sammitiya
25.	Sravasti	Many	Few	Sammitiya
26.	Kapilavastu	Many	30	Sammitiya
27.	Ramagrama	2	Few	-
28.	Kusinagara (Kushinagar)	Many deserted		
29.	Varanasi	30	3000	Sammitiya
30.	Sarnath	8	1500	Sammitiya
31.	Ghazipur (in U.P.)	10	1000	Hinayana
32.	Magadha	50	10000	Mixed
33.	Pataliputra (Patna)	1	100	Mixed
34.	Bodh Gaya	6	1000	Mixed
35.	Vaisali	10	1000	Mixed
36.	Rajagriha (Rajgir)	Many deserted		
37.	Nalanda University		1500	teachers
			10000	Mixed
38.	Hiranyaparvata (modern distt. of Monghyr in Bihar)	10	4000	Sammitiya
39.	Champa (modern Bhagalpur in Bihar)	2	200	Hinayana
40.	Kajinghara (Kajangala modern Rajmahal in Bengal)	7	300	Mixed
41.	Pundarvardhana (in Bengal)	20	3000	Mixed
42.	Samatata (in Bengal)	30	2000	Hinayana

Contd.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
43.	Tamralipti (in Bengal)	10	1000	Mixed
44.	Karnasuvarna (to the north-west of Tamralipti)	10	1000	Sammitiya
45.	Odra (Orissa)	100	10000	Mahayana
46.	Kalinga	10	500	Mahayana
47.	Dakshina-Kosala (modern Vidarbha)	100	10000	Mahayana
48.	Andhra	20	3000	Mixed
49.	Dhanakataka (Amaravati) in Andhra)	20	1000	Mahayana
50.	Dravida (Tamil Nadu)	100	10000	Hinayana
51.	Konkanapura (identified with the coastline from Bombay to Mangalore)	100	10000	Mixed
52.	Maharashtra	100	5000	Mixed
53.	Malwa	100	2000	Sammitiya
54.	Ujjain	4	300	Mixed
55.	Avanda (Avanti)	20	2000	Sammitiya
56.	Bharukaccha (Broach)	2	300	Mahayana
57.	Kachh (in Gujarat)	10	1000	Mixed
58.	Valabhi (in Gujarat)	100	6000	Sammitiya
59.	Anandapura (in Gujarat)	10	1000	Sammitiya
60.	Saurashtra (in Gujarat)	50	3000	Mahayana
61.	Gurjjara (in Gujarat)	1	100	Sarvastivada
62.	Atanabakela or Adhyavakila (in Gujarat)	80	5000	Sammitiya

Hiuen Tsang also gives interesting information about the Buddhist schools and discipline in the Sangha. He says,[159] "The different schools are constantly at variance, and their contending utterances rise like the angry waves of the sea. The different sects have their separate masters, and at variance directions aim at one. There are Eighteen schools, each claiming pre-eminence. The partisians of the Great and Little Vehicle are content to dwell apart. There are some who give themselves up to quiet contemplations, and devote themselves, whether walking or standing still or sitting down, to the acquirement of wisdom and insight; others, on the contrary, differ from these in raising noisy contentions about their faith. According to their fraternity, they are governed by distinctive rules and regulations."

By the seventy century AD, a number of monasteries had become great centres of learning. Of them, the most important ones were at Valabhi in Gujarat and Nalanda in Bihar. The Nalanda Mahavihara was more popular and had developed into an international seat of Buddhist learning and culture. It had on its rolls some 10,000 students from India and abroad.

Hiuen Tsang, who himself studied for five years at Nalanda, says: [160] "The priests, belonging to the convent, or strangers (residing therein) always reach to the number of 10,000, who all study the Great Vehicle, and also (the works belonging to) the eighteen sects, and not only so, but even ordinary works, such as the Vedas and other books, the Hetuvidya (logic), Sabdavidya (grammer), the Chikitsavidya (medicine), the works on Magic (Atharvaveda), the Sankhya; besides these they thoroughly investigate the "miscellaneous" works. There are 1000 men who can explain twenty collections of Sutras and Sastras; 500 men who can explain thirty collections and perhaps ten men, including the Master of the Law, who can explain fifty collections. Silabhadra alone has studied and understood the whole number. His eminent virtue and advanced age have caused him to be regarded as the chief member of the community."

In AD 643, Hiuen Tsang attended two grand assemblies convened by Harsha, first at Kanauj to honour the distinguished guest, and the second at Prayag (Allahabad) the usual quinquennial assembly at which the king gave charity (dana) to all the needy. Hiuen Tsang went back in AD 644 by crossing Punjab by way of Jalandhar and Taxila

taking the same route across the Hindu Kush through the Central Asian States. He reached China in the spring of AD 645 and was received with great honour by the people of his country. He took back with him to China the following Buddhist texts: [161]

1. One hundred and twenty-four works (sutras) of the Mahayana.
2. Other works, amounting in the whole to 520 fasciuli, carried by twenty-two horses.

Hiuen Tsang spent the rest of his life in a monastery, specially built for him and his follow translators in the then capital of China. While staying in Tz'u-en monastery in Ch'ang-an (Sian), Hiuen Tsang exchanged letters [162] with the chief monk of the Maha Bodhi monastery at Bodh Gaya in the years AD 652-654. Initiative in this regard was taken by Prajna-deva, the head of the Maha Bodhi monastery, who wrote first and sent the letter through a messenger going to China. This letter reached Hiuen Tsang in AD 652. In this letter, Prajna-deva addressed Hiuen Tsang in these words:

"Maha-sthavira (the senior and distinguished monk) Prajna-deva who is surrounded by the well-known in the Maha-bodhi monastery at the Vajrasana (spot where Gautama became the Buddha, the enlightened one) of the subtle and auspicious World-honoured One sends his greetings to the Moksh-acharya of Mahachina who has achieved a subtle understanding of the boundless Tripitaka, and wishes Your Reverened good health and happiness.

I, Bhikshu Prajna-deva, have composed a hymn in praise of the great divine power of the Buddha, as well as the sutras and sastras, and the comparative merit of Buddha-dharma. I have entrusted Bhikshu Dharma-dirgha(?) (Fa-ch'ang) to bring the hymn to you.

The profoundly learned Acharya Jnana-prabha here also sends his regards, and Upaska Surya-labdha also salutes you. We jointly send you two rolls of white cotton cloth to show our affection. As the distance is great, we pray that you will accept them without minding the meagreness.

If you require any scriptures, kindly send a list, and we shall make copies and send them to you.

Regards to the Moksh-acharya."

Hiuen Tsang responded to this letter by way of two letters, one to Prajna-deva and the other to Jnana-prabha. In his first letter dated the 2nd month, AD 654, Hiuen Tsang throws valuable light as to how Buddhist scholars held open debates in the Court of Harsha, before big gatherings. He writes:

"Bhikshu Hsuan-tsang of the great T'ang Empire begs to address this to the venerable Tripitaka-Master Prajna-deva of the Mahabodhi monastery.

Your Reverend, it has been quite long since we parted, which enhances my longing and admiration for you. The non-communication between us all the more leaves the thirst of the yearning unquenched.

Bhikshu Dharma-dirgha arrived here with your very kind letter which brought me delight. There were also two rolls of fine cotton cloth and one facsimile of a hymn. I feel rather embarrassed as my want of virtue does not deserve such kindness.

I can imagine how you have assimilated the theories of all the schools, pondered over all volumes of the scriptures, hoisted the flag of the right dharma, led the swerving people to the correct path, and beat back the discordant preachers. You surely maintain your spirit in front of princes and nobles, and compliment or criticize at will in a galaxy of talented people. All this contributes to your highly pleasant demeanour.

As for me, my incapacity is compounded by the decline of vigour. This all the more increase my yearnings when I remember the virtue of Your Reverend.

During my sojourn in your country, I had the honour of meeting Your Reverened. In the convocation at Kanya-kubja, we also engaged in a debate and argued out our respective view-points in the presence of the princes and thousands of devotees. As one of us expounded the tenets of the Mahayana school the other advocated the aim of Hinayana. In the course of debate, our arguments unavoidably got heated. In order to defend the truth, there was scant regard for personal feelings. Thus, there were clashes. But, as soon as the debate was over, we

did not take each other amiss. Now, you have sent word through the messenger apologizing for the past. How scrupulous you are:

You, holy sir, are profound in scholarship, eloquent in speech, firm in belief, and superb in cultivation. You are (in excellence) greater than the expanse of the water in the Anavatapa lake, and purer than the purest mani (jewel). Your Reverend set an example for emulation by the juniors among whom Your Reverend stood like a giant.

I wish you all the best in your endeavour in promoting the noble tradition and disseminating the true drama.

Now, there is a messenger returning to India, I send you my sincere regards and a little momento as a token of my gratitude. It is too inadequate to express my deep feelings for Your Reverened. I hope Your Reverend would appreciate this.

When I was returning from India, I lost a horse-load of scriptures in the river Sindhu. I attach herewith a list and request that they be sent to me. This much for the present".

In his second letter dated the 2nd month AD 654 to Jnana-prabha, Hiuen Tsang paid tribute to Silabhadra, his guru at Nalanda and the head of the University. He wrote:

"Bhikshu Hsuan-tsang of the great T'sang empire begs to address this to the Venerable Jnana-orabha, the Tripitaka-Master of Magadha in Central India.

More than ten years have elapsed since I bade farewell to Your Reverend. My yearning for Your Reverend increases with the passage of time, as we are separated by great distance, and with scarce communication between each other.

The arrival of Bhikshu Dharma-dirgha brought your kind inquiries, and news of your good health, which suddenly opened up the vistas (of memory), and brought before me the image of your Reverend. I cannot describe the ecstasy of that moment.

Years ago, our envoy returned (from India) and told

us that the great Dharm-akara Master* was inquiring about me at his death-bed. On hearing this, I felt my heart deeply stabbed, and could not recover from such a wound. Oh, it was as if a boat had capsized in the dukkha-sagara or a celestial being lost the light of his eyes. How unexpectedly soon had come the pain of our bereavement!

The great Dharm-akara Master had cultivated virtue in the past, and accumulated merits for a long time to come. This was why he was endowed with a harmonious and noble nature and uniquely outstanding talent. He rekindled the torch of wisdom and re-hoisted the flag of dharma. He extinguished the volcano of heterodoxy, and stopped the river of untruth from flooding. He led the exhausted travellers to the spiritual treasury, and opened up new vistas for those who had lost their bearings. He was at the same time a vast ocean and a lofty mountain, and a pillar of the edifice of dharma-paryaya. He was thoroughly conversant with the teachings of all sects of Triyana, whether they were deficient or perfect; and even with the writings of heterodoxy which propounded theories of Uchchheda-darsana and Nitya-darsana. They not only permeated his mind, but also liquefied in his heart. His literary style was circuitous while thoroughly expressing his ideas. His reasoning was allusive while clearly putting across his message. All this led to a mass following of his teachings, both the religious and the secular hailing him as a spiritual leader of India.

On top of it, he was skilfully persuasive, preaching day and night without fatigue. He filled the minds of the folks like street urns, providing inexhaustible drinks for them.

When I was seeking truth (in India), I had the honour of association with His Reverend and of benefiting by his teachings. Much as I was mediocre and unintelligent, I became amendable in his noble company."

Hiuen Tsang further tells in this letter of his translation work in China and repeats his request for copies of the scriptures which he had lost while crossing the

* Sila-bhadra, who was Hiuen Tsang's guru at Nalanda.

Sindhu river. Thus engaged in translation work, Hiuen Tsang died peacefully in AD 664. Of the innumerable Sanskrit texts translated by him, seventy-five works are still available in the collection of the Chinese Tripitaka.

SUMMING UP

For about 200 years after the Maha-parinirvana of the Buddha in BC 483, Buddhism was in the making and being consolidated. Then came Asoka (BC 273-232), the third Mauryan Emperor, who after finding solace in the Buddha-Dhamma, launched a vigorous campaign to preach and propagate the message of the Buddha. With his systematic and energetic efforts, Asoka took out Buddhism from the monasteries and made it a national religion. Thereafter, Buddhism dominated the Indian scene for about 1000 years. Besides the powerful kings like Kanishka, Harsha and other royal houses, this period saw the emergence of a galaxy of Buddhist saints and scholars who made immense contribution to the Buddhist philosophy and religion. Not only that, the religion of the Buddha was always the first choice of the thinkers and philosophers of ancient India. The princes, nobles and elite always considered it their honour to associate themselves one way or the other with the great name of the Buddha. The depressed and oppressed millions of Indians too found solace and inspiration in the Teachings of the Buddha.

"Ancient India was the country", as says Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan, where from king to beggar, from illiterate to philosopher, from the common people to the great intellects, all were vying with one another in their love of Buddhism through many centuries. Where in hills and forest, every city, every town and even in the villages, the quiet, calm hermitages, the monasteries, the universities of the Buddhist monks were spread; in which for thousands of years students from the various countries of the world came to learn the sublime teachings of the Buddha, the love and brotherhood of all humanity. The country, where the great thinkers, great mystics, great sages of Buddhism by their uncommon intellect, and supreme wisdom made a great impression upon the thought of the people; the sculptors and artists of Buddhism hewed great cave temples and stupas from the living rocks such as Ajanta, Ellora, and others which

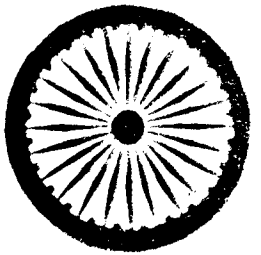
are to this day among the great achievements of human-

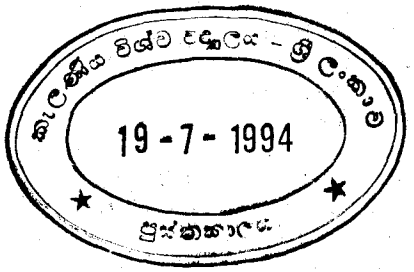
are to this day among the great achievements of human-

kind".

The flow of Buddhist missionaries to the other lands, imbued with the idea of 'Dhamma Vijaya', initiated by Asoka, continued unabated throughout the glorious epoch. One stream went to Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Kampuchea and the Malaya Archipelago. Another stream flowed into Central Asia, and from there to China, Vietnam, Korea and Japan. Yet another entered Tibet, and from there to China and Mongolia. As a result of their efforts, the Indian culture spread throughout Asia. Verily none else but the Buddhist monks carried the torch of Indian culture and civilization far and wide, and made India the Cultural Guru of the World. "The greatness[163] of their achievements can be imagined from the fact that they moulded the character and ideas of these people and made them Indian in thought and practice. The art, architecture, forms of worship and even manners and customs had been Indianised, and all this has been done not by the force of arms nor by the temptation of wealth but purely by goodwill. It was the spirit of penniless monks who set at naught all material considerations that produced these marvellous effects."

In sum, Buddhism in India reached its height of glory in all the fields during the 1000 years from third century BC to seventh century AD. And "those 1000 years were in many ways the grandest in our history. The name and fame of India rose to highest peaks in those centuries, and in the realm of art and literature, learning and piety, Indian achievement reached heights still unsurpassed".[164]





3

WHY BUDDHISM DECLINED?

The disappearance of Buddhism from India, the land of its birth, development and highest achievements, is the most surprising and painful phenomena. How and why the religion of the Buddha lost hold over its original adherents is such a perplexing problem that no two opinions agree. The most propagated view by the Hindu scholars is the so-called lax and degeneration in the moral and spiritual life of the Buddhist monks and nuns. In the light of the historical evidence, however, the charge of the fall in moral standards among the Sangha seems to be a mere myth without any relevance to facts. It is also not correct to say, as has been stated by Swami Vivekananda that 'Buddhism had to die a natural death in India as the disciples of Buddha took away from the nation the eternal God'. If that be so, how is it that Jainism has survived in India as Mahavira too repudiated the idea of a Supreme God. The Jains also do not admit, like the Buddhists, the authority of the Vedas. On this account, therefore, there was no reason why Buddhism should have declined.

In our opinion, Buddhism in India died an unnatural death and the reasons which led to its disappearance from the land of its birth were external rather than internal. Not only that, a systematic and calculated campaign had been launched by certain vested interests to

oust Buddhism from the land of its birth. The Buddha condemned the institution of caste and laid emphasis on equality of all human beings. The Brahmins went all out to defend the caste-system in order to cling to their privileges which flowed from it but the Buddhists, unlike the Jains, refused to compromise on this issue. This led to conflict. The Brahmins on the one hand launched a campaign of hatred against Buddhism; persecuted the Buddhists, and on the other hand assimilated the good points of Buddhism into their system so as to win back the masses. There were some internal defects in Buddhism also which hastened its down-fall in India.

THE BRAHMIN--BUDDHIST CONFLICT

Prior to the advent of Buddhism, India was unaware of the ethics of equality and universal brotherhood. According to the Purusha Sukta of the Rig Veda, the Brahmins came from the mouth, Kshatriyas from the arms, Vaishyas from the thighs, and Sudras from the feet of Brahma, the Creator. This society based on the mythical origin was known as Chaturvarna and was regulated by the principle of graded inequality; the Brahmins being at the top followed by Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras in descending order. This rule of graded inequality regulated their rights and privileges as well. Even the punishments for secular offences were based on the principle of inequality, the Brahmins always getting the minimum and the Sudras the maximum punishments. Thus the entire social structure was based on the principle of inequality.

The Buddha revolted against such oppressive social laws and condemned caste-system. He challenged[1] the divine origin of the caste, and showed the hollowness of the claim of the Brahmins of having been born from the mouth of Brahma. He also refuted the Brahmin claim that only they could attain spiritual virtues, and asserted that a man of any caste, colour or creed can develop in his heart such virtues. He further said: "Let no person, whether man or woman, whatever be his or her socio-economic background, be hindered from reaching the highest perfection, which is every-one's right and within every-one's reach and, more than that, is achievable by dint of one's own ceaseless striving, unaided by any divine or supernatural agent."

The Enlightened One further pointed out that all

human beings were alike and to divide them artificially was a folly. In the Vesettha Sutta,[2] He says that in the case of animal life there are different varieties based on different essential characteristics. So is the case with plant life. But there do not exist such differences which justify classification of human beings into water-tight compartments as all men are one and the same in their essential characteristics. Therefore, the Buddha asserted in a forceful manner that worth, based on deeds, rather than birth, an accidental thing, should be the measure of man. He also took concrete steps to eradicate the evil of caste. These steps were: exposing the myth of hereditary superiority claimed by the Brahmins; encouraging the down-trodden by dining at their houses; and accepting the low and lowly as equal members of the Sangha. Exhorting the Bhikkhus to forget their caste labels, the Buddha once said,[3] "Just, O brethren, as the great rivers-- Ganga, Yamuna, Aciravati, Saraswati and Mahi when they have fallen into the great ocean, lose their different names and are known as the great ocean-- Just so, O brethren, do these four castes-- Kshatriyas, Brahmins, Vaishyas and Sudras-- when they begin to follow the doctrine and discipline as propounded by the Tathagata, they renounce different names of castes and rank, and become members of one and the same society."

In the sixth century BC India, the Brahmins sought salvation and deliverance by resorting to sacrifices and the Jains and Ajivakas substituted sacrifices by self-mortification. Lord Buddha on the other hand advised His followers to cross the ocean of samsara by doing good to others instead of harming others or harming one's own self. He said the way to Nirvana is through: (i) self-control, self-restraint and elimination of passions; (ii) compassion towards all creatures, men, birds and beasts; and (iii) service of the poor and the weak. He also laid emphasis on: (a) equal opportunity for all; (b) equal status for all; (c) freedom of thought; and (d) universal brotherhood.

When the Buddha preached His doctrine glorious it attracted people from all walks of life; rich and poor, high and holy, and low and lowly. The Brahmins also did not lag behind. In fact, majority of the direct disciples of the Buddha were Brahmins. Even later, some of the leading lights of Buddhism were Brahmin converts. But as, in the following centuries, the social doctrine

of the Buddha gave impetus to the levelling up of the Indian society, and the lower classes asserted their right of equality, the Brahmins turned against Buddhism.

The Brahmins did not oppose Buddhism on account of its philosophical or ethical teachings but what they did not like was Buddhism's concept of equality. As Dr. Ambedkar says[4] "Inequality is the official doctrine of Brahminism. The Buddha opposed it root and branch. He was the strongest opponent of caste and the staunchest upholder of equality. There is no argument in favour of caste which He did not refute." No wonder, encouraged by the spirit of equality preached by the Buddha, the down-trodden asserted their right of freedom and challenged the supremacy of the Brahmins. This weakened the foundation of caste-system and in fact relegated the Brahmins to the background.

That the emergence of the Buddha had given a rude jolt to the caste-ridden Hindu society is also evident from the Hindu Shastras. In the story of Sannaka which venus received from Brahma, God is made to speak as follows:[5]

"When the Kaliyuga comes, I send Buddha, the son of Suddhodana the pious, to spread the good in the creation. Then the Mahamuira, i.e. the red wearing ones who derive their origin from him, will change every thing, and the dignity of the Brahmins will be gone to such a degree that a Sudra and Candala will share with them the presents and offerings."

When Buddhism weakened a bit, the Brahmins took all possible measures to regain their lost power and prestige. They took measures not only to fortify caste system but also to exterminate the teachings of the Buddha from India. To quote the words of Har Dayal:[6]

"The priests exterminated Pali in India. They did not detest Pali on account of philosophical doctrines or the ethical precepts of Buddhism. They even acknowledged Buddha as a great teacher and deified Him. But they wished that Buddha's wonderful words should not be heard within India as those words would have the power of dynamite against the citadel of caste. They said: "Perish Pali; Perish India; but our caste must rule".

In order to compete with Buddhism, the Brahmins had to make a number of changes in their doctrines. They gave up himsa, animal sacrifices. They were also prepared to give up the doctrine of the infallibility of

the Vedas. On the point of Chaturvarna, however, they were not prepared to yield. They had to recognise the force of the Buddha's arguments against Chaturvarna. This they did, not by yielding to its logic but by developing a new philosophic justification for Chaturvarna which is found in the Bhagavada-Gita, a post-Buddha work. As says P.L. Narasu[7] in 'the Essence of Buddhism'. "The main object of the Gita is to support covertly the domination and prestige of the Brahman class while appearing to provide for the wants which Buddhism satisfied. Whatsoever is noble and sublime in the Gita is what Brahmanism has freely borrowed from its rival and utilized for its own purposes, especially to prevent the Sudras from seceding from their old faith. The rest is a conglomerate of repetitions, contradictions, absurdities, the result of an unsuccessful attempt to reconcile all phases of orthodox opinion."

That the main purpose of the Gita was to defend and fortify the caste-system is evident from the way it interpreted the word 'Dharma'. The Vedic meaning of the word 'Dharma' was rituals or observances. In the Gita as well as the Manu-Smriti the word 'dharma' has been used as meaning 'the duties of the four castes in this world'. In the Gita, Krishna tells Arjuna to fight, having regard to what his 'dharma' (caste-duty) is. He further says,[8] "it is better to die performing one's caste duties; following the duties enjoined on another caste is dangerous (B.G. 3.35). The Buddhists on the other hand were not prepared to give up their opposition to the concept of Chaturvarna. This is the primary reason for the Brahmin-Buddhist conflict.

Dr. Ambedkar traces the origin of the Brahmin-Buddhist conflict to another source. He says,[9] "while going through the Buddhist literature, I find that 90 per cent followers of the Buddha were Brahmins. Brahmins used to come to the Buddha for discussion and argumentation, and when defeated, used to become faithful to the Buddha and ultimately accepted Buddhism. The Buddhist literature is full of such incidents. Therefore, how is it that Buddhism that had flourished amongst the majority of Brahmins was later on destroyed by the Brahmins themselves.

In my opinion the main reason for this was the family deity's (kula deva) worship. In India like the village deity and national deity, there were family deities also who were worshipped through the Brahmins. The priests who

used to go for worshipping these deities started influencing the affairs of the State through the queens. Asoka after embracing Buddhism discontinued this practice and removed the idols of such deities. Asoka said, "As I venerate the Buddha, the Enlightened One, there is no need to worship any other deity." This action of Asoka disturbed the Brahmins very much as it ended their unfair means of livelihood and exploitation. They pledged to take revenge for this loss.

The Brahmins were of the view that after death kings go to hell because of their errors and omissions. Therefore, they did not agree to be rulers but preferred to be the Chief Advisers to the Kings. In order to take revenge for the loss they suffered on account of stoppage of Kulapuja (family deity's worship). Brahmins gave up the approved motto of to be advisers only and tried to grab power. With the help of their well-wisher Kshatriyas, they also organised a united Brahmin-Kshatriya axis against Buddhism. The ascendency of Brahminism again in Indian society is one of the reasons for the downfall of Buddhism."

The emergence of Buddhism apart from down-grading the Brahmins, had also given a death blow to the divine right of the Kshatriya Kings. No wonder, therefore, the Kshatriyas, who were in initial stages the supporters of the creed of the Buddha, in later times, became antagonistic towards it. As a writer puts,[10] "the Kshatriyas were afraid of Buddhism because it threatened the very foundation of their existence as a class as oppressed people encouraged by its equality preachings were trying to rise." Thus to safeguard their interests, the ambitious Kshatriyas entered into conspiracy with the Brahmins and took steps to fortify the caste system. By mutual arrangement, the Kshatriyas agreed to be the Kings and to have the Brahmins as their Chief Ministers. This unholy alliance ensured power and prestige for both these classes and permanent lower position for others, which Buddhism could never tolerate. To retain the political power in their hands, therefore, these classes formed a united front against Buddhism and thus circumvened its development.

THE PROPAGANDA OF HATRED

The religion of the Buddha was an eye-sore to the

reactionary Brahmins as it had toppled the priest-class from its high place which had for centuries assured for them all sorts of privileges and material comforts. So when the hold of Buddhism weakened, they retaliated and attacked Buddhism in various ways to avenge their loss. They used the meanest language and the meanest tactics to defame and run down Buddhism in the eyes of the general public. They even twisted the meaning of certain words and phrases which were peculiar to Buddhism. The critical analysis in the sequel will, it is hoped, enable the readers to realize the weight of our argument.

1. Asoka, the greatest Buddhist monarch refers to himself in his Edicts as 'Devanam Priya'-- 'Beloved of the Gods' but the Brahmin grammarians, translated this word as 'Beloved of the fools'. This is what R.K. Mookerjee says[11] about this debauchery: "For the expression Devanampriya Priyadarsi, V.A. Smith's translation 'His Sacred and Gracious Majesty' seems to me to be the most appropriate. The form Devnampriya instead of Deva-Priya would be an epithet of contempt under a rule of Panini (vi.3, 21) but is mentioned among the exceptions to the rule by Katyayana (about 350 BC according to Sir R.G. Bhandarkar) supported by Patanjali (150 BC) and even the Kasika (AD 650). The exception is not, however, allowed by the later grammarian Bhattoji Dikshita who insists on taking Devanampriya as a term of contempt, implying a fool (murkha) devoid of the knowledge of Brahma.... Thus a title which was complimentry during the Nandas, Mauryas and Sungas, suffers a deterioration in sense under later Brahminical prejudice against the most distinguished Buddhist monarch."

2. In Buddhism, the Trinity of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha is a by-word. The Buddhists take refuge thrice in this holy triple-gem.[12] They salute thrice to the Enlightened One by reciting 'Namo Tassa Bhagvato Arhato Samma Sam Buddhas". Again the Buddhists conclude their congregrations by reciting three times the gatha of 'Sabhe Satta Sukhi Hontu....' Thus the word "three" has a special significance in the religion of the Buddha. This is as it should be. To do any act 'three'

times is not only popular in 'Buddhism' alone but it is an established practice in 'law' also. No 'Bill' can become an 'Act' until and unless its 'three readings' are over. It is, therefore, rather strange that the figure 'three'

3. Lord Buddha passed away at Kusinara (Kushinagar) in Deoria District of Uttar Pradesh. Kushinagar is 32 miles towards East from Gorakhpur and 21 miles from Deoria. It is situated on the western bank of the river Hiranyavati and its site is represented by the large Rambhar-ka-Tila[13] on the western bank of Rambhar Lake. The area around Kusinara, is known as 'Harramba'. The combination of 'Hiranyavati' and 'Rambhar' perhaps gave the title of 'Harramba' to this area. Kushinagar being the seat of the 'Maha-parinirvana' of the Buddha became in due course the most important and sacred place of pilgrimage for the Buddhists. Naturally, the Buddhists from all parts of the country flocked to this place every year in large numbers to pay homage to the Master. The Brahmins were, it seems, upset by the popularity of Kusinara. So they conspired to discredit it with a view to turning away the masses coming on pilgrimage to Kusinara. They gave religious bias to their otherwise cunning move and preached amongst the ignorant laity that the person who dies in 'Harramba'-- area around Kusinara-- goes to hell or is reborn as an ass but the person who dies in Kasi (Varanasi) goes to heaven. What a clever modus-operandi of discrediting the Buddha, and befooling the masses!

To support our view, we have a very convincing and historical proof from the life of Mahatma Kabir who was a social and religious rebel of the fifteenth century. In his days, the mischievous propaganda, as referred to above, was very much in vogue. Kabir vehemently protested against this non-sensical notion. He declared that if the actions of a person were good he would doubtlessly achieve salvation irrespective of the fact whether he dies in Kasi or in Harramba. And to prove conclusively that the belief about Harramba was false and devoid of any sense, Kabir, in old age, intentionally travelled to that prohibited land and died there in 1518 AD in a small town Maghar in Gorakhpur District which is not very far off from Kushinagar. Kabir, in his sayings,[14]

twice refers to this episode and fully explains the purpose of his pilgrimage to Maghar in spite of the strong objections of his friends and admirers. Referring to the Maghar incident, Wescott, writes[15] as under in his authentic work on Kabir: "It was the wish of his disciples that Kabir should end his days at Kasi where so much of religious work had been accomplished. All who died in Kasi, they urged, would pass immediately in the presence of Ram, while those died at Maghar would return to this world and assume the form of an ass. Kabir rebuked them for their want of faith. Is the power of Ram limited that he cannot save his servant because he prefers to die outside Kasi, the city of Siva?"

So strong was the feeling of fear and awe amongst the Hindus that even after Kabir's death at Maghar they could not get rid of their false belief. Hence, they refused to erect any shrine in honour of Kabir at that place and instead erected a memorial at Kasi. The Muslims erected a memorial to Kabir at Maghar, his last resting place. The main shrine at Maghar has thus always been under the charge of the Muslims and is still under their charge, though a shrine exclusively for Hindus has since been constructed there.

4. The Brahmin fanatics did not stop at that. They continued relentlessly the propaganda of hatred and abhorrence against the Buddhists for centuries and perpetuated this spirit in the literature as well. Quoted below are few instances from such literature:-

(i) Nilkant in his Prayaschit Mayukha quotes a verse from Manu which says:[16]

> "If a person touches a Buddhist or a follower of Panchupat, Lokayataka, Nastika and Mahapataki, he shall purify himself by a bath."

(ii) The same doctrine is preached by Aparaka in his Smriti. Vradha Harit goes further and declares entry into the Buddhist temple as sin requiring a purificatory bath for removing the impurity.

(iii) The most striking illustration of this attitude towards the Buddhists is to be found in the Mricchakatika.[17] In Act VII of that Drama (in Sanskrit) the hero Charudatta and his friend Maitriya are shown waiting for Vasantasena in the Park outside the city of Ujjain.

She fails to turn up and Charudatta decides to leave the park. As they are leaving, they see the Buddhist monk by name Samvakaha. On seeing him, Charudatta says:-

"Friend Maitriya, I am anxious to meet Vasantsena. Come, let us go (After walking a little) Ah, here's an inauspicious sight, a Buddhist monk coming towards us. (After a little reflection) well, let him come this way, we shall follow the other path. (Exit).

In Act VIII, the monk is in the Park of Sakara, the King's brother-in-law, washing his clothes in a pool. Sakara, accompanied by Vita, turns up and threatens to kill the monk. The following conversation between them is revealing:-

"Sakara:- Stay, you wicked monk.

Monk:- Ah! Here's the King's brother-in-law. Because some monk has offended him, he now beats up any monk he happens to meet.

Sakara:- Stay, I will now break your head as one breaks a radish in a tavern (Beats him).

Vita:- Friend, it is not proper to beat a monk who has put on the suffron-robes, being disgusted with the world.

Monk:- (Welcomes) Be pleased, lay brother.

Sakara:- Friend, see. He is abusing me.

Vita:- What does he say?

Sakara:- He calls me lay brother (Upasaka). Am I a barber?

Vita:- Oh! he is really praising you as a devotee of the Buddha.

Sakara:- Why has he come here?

Monk:- To wash these clothes.

Sakara:- Ah! you wicked monk. Even I myself do not bathe in this pool; I shall kill you with one stroke."

After a lot of beating, the monk is allowed to go. Here is a Buddhist Monk in the midst of the Hindu crowd. He is shunned and avoided. The feeling of disgust against him is so great that the people even shun the road the monk is travelling. The feeling of repulsion is so intense that the entry of the Buddhist was enough to cause the exit of the Hindus. The Buddhist monk is on a par with the Brahmin. A Brahmin is immune from death-penalty. He is even free from corporal punishment. But the Buddhist monk is beaten and assaulted without remorse, without compunction as though there was nothing wrong in it."

(iv) Chanakya (Kautilya), the famous Brahmin Chief Minister of Chandragupta Maurya, was also a party to this hatred campaign against Buddhists. He says,[18] "When a person entertains in dinner, dedicated to gods and ancestors, Sakyas (Buddhists), Ajivakas, Sudras and exiled persons, a fine of one hundred Panas shall be imposed."

(v) Yajnavalkya, the great Hindu Smrtikar, declares[19] that the very sight of a Buddhist monk, even in dreams, is inauspicious and should be avoided.

(vi) The writers of the Puranas also did much propaganda against Buddhism. They accepted Buddha as an Avtara of Vishnu but treated Him with contempt:[20]

(a) The Brhannardiya Purana makes it a principal sin for the Brahmana to enter the house of a Buddhist even in times of great peril.

(b) The Agni Purana declares that the son of Suddhodana (Buddha) beguiled the 'daityas to become Buddhists.

(c) The Vayu Purana says contemptuously about the Buddhists: "With white teeth, eyes brought under control, head shaved and red clothes, the Sudras will perform religious deeds."

(d) The Vishnu Purana dubs Buddha as a great seducer. He is called 'Maha Moha' who appeared in the world to delude the demons. It further warns of the sin of conversing with Buddhists adding that those who merely talk to shaven ascetics fall into hell.

5. As a part of their offensive strategy, the Hindus adopted yet another method of discrediting the Buddhists and their shrines. They gave abusive and filthy names to the Buddhist monasteries, viharas, etc. For example, the ruins of a stupa at Ghantasila in Andhra Pradesh

are called 'Lanja Dibba'[21] i.e. the harlot's mound. The association of such filthy names with the Buddhist ancient sites is quoted by certain ignorant scholars as an argument for saying that Buddhism disappeared from India because its monasteries had become the centres of corruption and that the Bhikkhus were not leading a very reputable life. They argue that as most of the places of Buddhist worship had reached the lowest ebb in morality, the common people were disgusted with them and turned away from the monasteries. We agree that when the monasteries had become sufficiently rich the Buddhist monks became somewhat self-centred and neglected their duty towards the spiritual and social needs of the masses. They, thus, started living comfortably within the monasteries and did not adhere to the ideal of social service. This ultimately affected to some extent the propagation and preservation of the Dhamma. But to say that Buddhism declined because of the fall in the moral standards of the Sangha is not warranted. There is no proof to support it except the doubtful names associated with certain sites. In our opinion these abusive names were coined by the interested Hindu protagonists with a view to discrediting the Buddhist shrines. But for this sinister propaganda stunt, there seems no justification for these non-sensical labels assigned to the sacred Buddhist shrines. Mark what says V.R. Narla:-[22] 'It is really amazing, and not a little saddening, that not merely at Ghantasila, but at Gudivada, Bhattiprolu, Chinna Ganjam, Pedda Ganjam and quite a few other places the remnants of the sacred shrines of Buddhism came to be given such filthy names as Lanja Dibba and Bojamadani Dibba. The only exception to this, which I know of, is the stupa at Amaravati. Its local name is Dipala Dinne, i.e. the mound of lamps. But even this reference to lamps may not after all be a very complimentary one, for practically at all places where there is a Buddhistic mound there is a local tradition that the prostitute who had her residence on the mound used a lamp for signalling. May be the bad name to the Buddhistic mounds is an index of the fanaticism with which Buddhism was perhaps suppressed by later-day Hindu zealots, or may be it denotes the low levels to which Buddhism had sunk in its last days when it assumed the forms of Vajrayana and Sahajayana, forms in which it hardly differed from umbriddled tantrism. Of these two reasons, I, for one, give

greater credence to the former".

To prove the folly of the latter argument we just request the readers to bear in mind the far more corrupt practices prevalent in ancient Hindu temples. We have no intention to give here the long list of misdeeds of the Brahmin priests of those days as it is felt that the following quotation from an article by Ishwar Singh Bais is sufficient enough to reflect the life in ancient Hindu temples. He writes:-[23]

"The dancing girls attached to each temple took their place in the second rank. They were devdasis or slaves of the gods, but they were called by the more vulgar name of prostitutes. And in fact they were bound by their profession to grant their favours, if such they be, to anybody demanding them in return for ready money. It appears that at first they were reserved exclusively for the enjoyment of Brahmins. And these women, who made a public traffic of their charms, were consecrated in a special manner to the service of the divinities of India. Their official duties consisted of dancing and singing within the temple twice a day, morning and evening, and also at public ceremonies. All the time which they had to spare in the intervals of the various ceremonies was devoted to infinitely more shameful practices, and it was not an uncommon thing to see even sacred temples converted into mere brothels". Further, "There were few temples where the presiding deity did not claim the power of curing barrenness in women. Usually the priests advised them to pass the night in the temple, where, they said, God, touched by their devotion, would perhaps visit them in the spirit and will intercourse with them. By this trick the priests satisfied their carnal lust".

Apart from the above mentioned malpractices prevalent in ancient Hindu Temples, the importance attached in Hinduism to the sexual relations is also evident from the errotic scenes on the walls of the temples at Konark, Khajuraho, etc. About the Konark sculptures, A.L. Basham[24] says in 'The Wonder that was India': "The exceptionally frank erroticism of many of the Konark sculptures have given the 'Black Pagoda' a rather infamous reputation. Maithuna figures, of couples closely embracing or actually in coitus, are common enough as decorative features of many Indian temples, but those of Konark are exceptionally vivid". The same can be said about

Khajuraho sculptures. Thus it can be said without any hesitation that if any where the moral standards had fallen, these were the abodes of Hindu gods and goddesses. In fact, as says Ishwar Singh Bais,[25] "In many temples, and after the eighth century AD in almost all the Hindu temples degeneration set in and with it temple life turned into hell. Priests sacrificed holiness and morality, but preserved greed and lust". If Hinduism could flourish under such corrupt atmosphere it is not clear why Buddhism disappeared, even if there had been some fall in moral standards of its votaries; though we vehemently refute that. Hence, we assert that the charge of corruption in the monasteries is not only baseless but mischievous too, and reasons for the downfall of Buddhism must be sought elsewhere.

THE PERSECUTION

One of the cardinal causes which hastened the decline and downfall of Buddhism in India was its persecution at the hands of rulers as well as religious fanatics.

Pushyamitra, Brahmin Commander-in-Chief of Brihadratha, the last Maurayan King, was the first royal persecuter of the Buddhists. He murdered the King in about 185 BC; usurped the throne of Magadha, and let loose a reign of terror. Another Hindu king to persecute the Buddhists was Sasanka, the king of Gauda (Bengal), whose first treacherous act was the murder of Rajyavardhana in 605 AD, elder brother of Harsha, the last Buddhist Emperor. Sasanka was a Brahmin by caste and a Saiva by faith. He was so fanatic that in his anger he almost destroyed the Bodhi Tree. Hiuen Tsang who visited Buddha Gaya in 637 AD, about three decades after the incident, records as follows:[26] "In late times Sasanka-raja (She shang-kia) being a believer in heresy, slandered the religion of Buddha, and through envy destroyed the convents and cut down the Bodhi Tree, digging it up to the very springs of the earth: but yet he did not get to the bottom of the roots. Then he burnt it with fire and sprinkled with the juice of the sugarcane, desiring to destroy it entirely, and not leave a trace of it behind". He also removed a Buddha image from a temple near the Bodhi Tree and replaced it by that of Siva. He also threw into the Ganga a sacred stone bearing the footprints of Buddha in Pataliputra. And to fulfil his evil designs, Sasanka

is said to have exterminated the Buddhist monks in the area around Kushinagar.[27]

One of the greatest persecutors of Buddhism in India was the Huna chief, Mihirakula, who did Immense damage to the Buddhist shrines[28] in Gandhara, Punjab and Kashmir. Mihirakula was a Saiva and a great patron of the Brahminical faith. In his madness, he is said to have razed to the ground as many as 1600 viharas, stupas and monasteries, and put to death nine hundred Kotis of lay adherents of Buddhism.[29] Toramana, another member of the same tyrannical dynasty is said to have destroyed the Ghositarama monastery at Kausambi.

About the persecution of Buddhists in Kashmir, F.M. Hussnain[30] says: "It was Nara, who started the process which resulted in the extinction of Buddhism from Kashmir. He got burnt the Buddhist viharas of Kashmir and uprooted the Buddhist population by confiscating their lands and bestowing them to the Brahmins. What happened in Kashmir was a part of similar process of elimination of the Buddhists in the country. In the struggle between Brahminism and Buddhism, the former was victorious. Under such circumstances, extinction of Buddhism from Kashmir was a question of time".

Hussnain adds, "Pravarasena came to power during the late part of the sixth century. He had to repulse attacks of Mummuni, the Muslim chief from Central Asia. He built the city of Pravarasenanagar with shrines of five Goddesses. His uncle Jayendra established the famous vihara known as Jayendravihara. It housed the biggest statue of Buddha. This Vihara was visited by Hiuen Tsiang during his stay in Kashmir and he mentioned it by the name of Che-ye-in-to-lo. This vihara was burnt down by Ksemagupta, who melted down the colossal statue for his new temple dedicated to Siva".

Another avowed enemy of Buddhism, who went to the extent of saying that "the teaching of the Buddha was useless like the milk split on dog's hide" was Kumarila Bhatt, a Brahmin. He appears to have lived in the seventh century AD. At his instance, Suddhanvan,[31] the king of Ujjain, is said to have exterminated the Buddhists. The ruthless persecution of the Buddhists by Suddhanvan, at the instigation of Kumarila Bhatt, is recorded in two biographies of Sankaracarya, that is, the Sankara-vijaya by Anandagiri, a direct disciple of Sankaracarya, and Sankara-digvijayam by Madhava (fourteenth century

AD). In fact, Madhava Acharya asserts that, at the instigation of Kumarila Bhatt, Suddhanvan "issued orders to put to death all the Buddhists from Ramesvaram to the Himalayas. He further ordered that any one who does not kill a Buddhist would be slain".

Sankaracarya the Vedanta teacher, was also responsible for the persecution of Buddhists. In fact, he struck a terror into the hearts of the Buddhists. According to a Tibetan tradition, at his approach, "the Buddhists in the monasteries began to disperse pell-mell". He himself says at one place in the Bhashya on Brahma Sutra that "Buddha was an enemy of the people and taught contradictory and confusing things".[32]

What was the modus operandi adopted by the Hindus to oust Buddhism from the land of its birth is well illustrated by the legend of Gaya Asura which is recorded in the Gaya Mahatmya, the concluding portion of the Vayu Purana (Chap. 105-112). According to this legend, Gaya-Asura (demon) had attained holiness to such an extent that all who saw or touched him went to heaven. Yama, the lord of hell, grew jealous, and appealed to the gods to limit Gaya Asura's powers. The gods thereupon waited upon Gaya and begged him to grant his pure and holy body for performing a sacrifice. To this, Gaya assented and lay down with his head resting where the old town of Gaya is. The gods then placed a rock over his head. But this proved insufficient to keep him quiet. Ultimately, Gaya Asura became motionless when Lord Vishnu himself sat upon the stone to prevent its moving, and also promised that the rock over his head will be declared the holiest spot on earth; the devas would rest on that stone; the place would be named as Gaya-Kashetra; and that who ever offered funeral cakes and performed funeral ceremonies would earn merit himself and transmit his ancestors to the heaven, the region of Brahma.

How old is the legend of Gaya Asura is rather difficult to say. Whatever may be the claims of the orthodox Hindus about the antiquity of Gaya, there is sufficient evidence to show that the city of Gaya was elevated to its present status in the Hindu world only after the downfall of Buddhism in India.

In the opinion of Dr. Rajindralal Mitra, a scholar with rare historical insight, the incredible legend related in the Vayu Purana contains an allegory of the final victory of Brahmanism over Buddhism which had flourished

strongly in and around Gaya for many centuries. To quote his own words:-[33]

"The Hindus believe this story to be literally true, but Dr. Buchanan calls it 'a monstrous legend' and well it may be. At first sight nothing can appear more absurd and stupid than this story; it offends every sense of propriety, and has not even the merit of ingenuity in its narration. The Brahmayoni Hill, which is the same with Kalahala Mountain, is scarcely three miles in length, and the idea of locating on it a being 125 yojans or 576 miles in height and 268 miles in girth would never struck the poorest faller. A head a mile in circumference on a body of 576 miles high would bear to each other about the same relation which a pin's head would to the ordinary human body. The helplessness of the gods to keep down a prostrate monster and their futile attempts to prevent him moving, are as childish as possible. And such being the case, the question suggests itself. How is it that the author of the Vayu Purana of which the Gaya Mahatmya professes to be a part, invented so puerile a story for ensuring the respect and devotion of the people at large to this place? He was not wanting in intelligence, for he discusses many abstruse questions of philosophy with considerable tact and ingenuity. It would be illogical and untrue to say that he could not distinguish the reasonable from the puerile and absurd. To reject, therefore, the story as absurd would in my mind, appear hasty, and indicative of idle impatience. It would much more become the philosophic historian to assume that something esoteric is hidden under the garb of an extravagant fable; and that esoteric meaning. I believe, it is easily found, if the legend be taken as allegory of the success of Brahmanism over Buddhism".

"Gaya is called an Asura, which ordinarily means a Titan, a demon, a vicious monster, a reviler of gods and religion; but he has not been portrayed as such. He revels not in crime, he injures none, and offends neither the gods nor religion by word or deed. On the contrary, he is described as a devout Vaishnava (sresthah Vaishnavah), was devoted himself to rigorous penance, to long protracted meditations, and to the acquirement of the highest purity of body and soul; one whose very touch sufficed to cleanse mankind of the greatest sin, and to translate them to heaven. The most serious charge brought against him was that he made salvation too

simple and summary. The epithet in his case can, therefore, only mean that he did not profess the faith of the Brahmans, nor follow their ways, in short he was a heretic. This character has always been assigned to the chief among the Buddhists. .They were pious, they were self-mortifying, they devoted themselves greatly to penance and meditation; but they did away with the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Brahmans, and the Gaya therefore may safely be taken to be a personification of Buddhism. His body measured 576 x 268 miles, and the country from Kalinga to the Himalaya, and from Central India to Bengal--the area over which Buddhism had spread at the time when the legend was written--covered fully that space, and a great deal more. The headquarters of Buddhism were then at Gaya; and the town of Gaya is even now barely a mile in extent. The attempt of the gods to put down the head of the monster typifies the attempts of the Hindus to assail Buddhism at its inspiring centre, the headquarters; and the thwack of Vishnu's mace indicates the resort which had been made to force when religious preaching had failed to attain the end. The rock of religion was placed on the head of the infidel, and the force of the gods kept it fixed and immovable. It was the blessing of the gods, too, which sanctified the seat of Buddhism into a principal sanctuary of the Hindu faith. We are well aware of the means resorted to at Puri, Bhuvnesvara, and elsewhere to render Buddhist emblems. Buddhist shrines, and even Buddhist idols subservient to Hindu worship, and it would not be at all unreasonable to suppose that the same process had been resorted to at Gaya".

The royal and religious persecution apart, the Buddhists were even subjected to social persecution and social boycott. There is evidence to show that when Buddhism began to decline, the Hindus took advantage of the poverty of the Buddhists; allowed their entry back into the Hindu fold but condemned them as Untouchables, the lowest varna, outside the pale of Hindu caste structure (chaturvarna). They were completely ex-communicated from the society, and were dubbed as Pariahs, Panchamas, Avarnas, Ati-Shudras--the people whose mere touch and even shadow would pollute the caste Hindus. They were forced to live outside the villages and were subjected to numerous social disabilities. They were denied educational facilities, and could take up only the lower and

degrading occupations. Not only they were denied the use of wells, tanks and other public places but they had also no right to acquire property. In short, they were declared as slaves who had no choice but to serve the so-called high castes for no reward whatsoever. No wonder, under the burden of poverty coupled with social persecution and exploitation, in due course, the followers of the Buddha completely forgot their glorious heritage and reconciled themselves to their pitiable lot. The harsh treatment meted out to the Untouchables, who are known as Scheduled Castes now, by the Caste Hindus can only be explained in the context of it being the result of prejudice and hatred on their part against Buddhism. Otherwise, why is it that a large mass of people were divested of all means to progress, and were damned as Unapproachables, Unspeakables, and Untouchables.

That the Untouchables or the Scheduled Castes of to-day are the Buddhists of yesterday can be proved on more than one count. Firstly, almost all their customs and manners are essentially Buddhistic. Secondly, they do not bother much for the Hindu gods and goddesses. Like the Buddhists, who worship Buddha, their greatest Guru, they adore their Gurus like Ravidas, Chokhamela, Kabir, etc. So like the Buddhists they are Gu-bhaju, who worship their Gurus, and not Dev-bhaju, who worship their gods and goddesses as is the case with the Hindus. Thirdly, some of the Scheduled Castes of Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi and Rajasthan call themselves Ad-Dharmis or' 'Adi-Dharmis'. The word 'Ad' means ancient, earlier or original and the Ad-Dharmis believe that they are the followers of an ancient faith. Undoubtedly the names like 'Ad-Dharmi' and 'Adi-Dharmi' have Buddhistic seeds as they resemble the Buddhist terms like Adi-Buddha and Adi-Dharma which, according to a Mahayana tradition represent intelligence or Mind and Matter respectively. Further, the Buddhists have all along been calling their religion a Dharma or Saddharma, and the followers of Buddhism in Orissa call themselves as Mahima Dharmis (followers of praise-worthy Dharma).

Verily, these people were Buddhists in distant past. What happened later seems to be that due to persecution and lack of education they forgot the name of the Buddha or may be, they abandoned Lord's name purposely to avoid hardships as Achyutananda, a sixteenth century poet of Orissa, consoles them by saying that "it is desir-

able in the Kaliyuga that the followers of Buddha should be disguised".[34]

The arrival of the Muslims further hastened the decay of Buddhism in India. When the Muslims came they had two objects before them--one to capture political power and the other to spread Islam. In order to achieve their second object they planned to do away with the Buddhist and Hindu Temples and their monks or priests as they were the repositories of religious thought. They had particular bias against Buddhist monks who spread the message of equality preached by the Tathagata. This bias was calculated as the Muslims found it difficult to preach their prophet's message of equality in view of the similar teachings of the Buddha. So the Muslim fanatics razed the monasteries to the ground and massacred most of the monks residing in them. Those lucky few who could escape the sword had to flee for their life and seek asylum in the neighbouring countries. Two notable Muslim Kings who destroyed the Buddhist shrines were Mahmud Gazinavi and Bakhtiaruddin Khilji. The former plundered the Buddhist shrines at Kot Kangra (Himachal Pradesh) in the tenth century and the latter destroyed the monasteries of Nalanda, Vikramasila and Odentapuri which were living institutions till the twelfth century. Commenting on the Muslim invasion, Dr. Ambedkar says:[35] "The Musalman invaders sacked the Buddhist Universities of Nalanda, Vikramasila, Jagaddala, Odantapuri to name only a few. They raised to the ground Buddhist monasteries with which the country was studded. The Monks fled away in thousands to Nepal, Tibet and other places outside India. A very large number were killed outright by the Muslim commanders. How the Buddhist priesthood perished by the sword of the Muslim invaders has been recorded by the Muslim historians themselves. Summarizing the evidence relating to the slaughter of the Buddhist Monks perpetrated by the Musalman General in the course of his invasion of Bihar in 1197 AD. Mr. Vincent Smith says:-*

> "The Musalman General, who had already made his name a terror by repeated plundering expeditions in Bihar, seized the Capital by a daring stroke. The almost contemporary historian met one of the survivors of the attacking party in AD 1243, and learned from him that the Fort of Bihar was seized by a party of only two hundred horsemen, who boldly rushed the Eastern gate and gained possession of the place. Great quantities of plunder were obtained, and the slaughter of the 'shaven headed Brahmans', that is to say the Buddhist monks, was so thoroughly completed, that when the victor sought for some one capable of explaining the contents of the books in the libraries of the monasteries, not a living man could be found who was able to read them. 'It was discovered', we are told, 'that the whole of that fortress and city was a college, and in the Hindi tongue they call a college Bihar".

* Early History of India (1924), pp. 419, 420.

Such was the slaughter of the Buddhist priesthood perpetrated by the Islamic invaders. The axe was struck at the very root. For by killing the Buddhist priesthood Islam killed Buddhism. This was the greatest disaster that befell the religion of Buddha in India. Religion like any other ideology can be sustained only by propaganda. If propaganda fails, religion must disappear. The priestly class religion must disappear. The sword of Islam fell heavily upon the priestly class. It perished or it fled outside India. Nobody remained to keep the flame of Buddhism burning".

How some Hindu Yogins exploited the situation created by the Muslim invasion of the Buddhist shrines in Bihar is vividly described by Dharmasvamin, a Tibetan pilgrim, who visited Bihar about three decades after catastrophe. According to him, Ratnabodhi, the biggest library at Nalanda, which had escaped destruction at the hands of the Muslims, was burnt by Hindu mendicants. He says "they (Hindus) performed a Yajna, fire sacrifice, and threw living embers and ashes from the sacrifice pit into the Buddhist temples, etc. This produced a great conflagration which consumed Ratnabodhi, the nine-storeyed library of the Nalanda University".[36]

That the opponents of Buddhism among the Hindus did not lag behind in destroying the Buddhist shrines at other places is evident from the heaps of ashes, burnt images and bones of the monks found by the archaeologists at Sarnath and its neighbourhood. Apparently, the monas-

teries were burnt by the fanatics and this seems to have happened more than once, as says Major Kittoe who carried out excavations at Sarnath in 1851. He says,[37] "All has been sacked and burned-- priests, temples, idols, all together, for in some places, bones, iron, wood, and stone are found in huge masses, and this has happened more than once".

The destruction of Buddhist centres gave such a fatal blow to the Buddhists that it was impossible for them to recover again the lost ground. Hence, during the following centuries Buddhism was utterly neglected by its votaries on the one hand and thousands of Buddhists shrines were either destroyed, plundered or usurped by its opponents on the other hand. How the Buddhist monuments continued to be destroyed and plundered for centuries merely for the sake of material, will be evident from the few examples quoted below:

(i) The magnificent stupa of Bharhut in Madhya Pradesh, which has since earned name and fame throughout the world for its finest specimens of Indian Art and Sculpture of about the second century BC, was pulled down by the ignorant local people merely for the sake of bricks required for their houses. Cunningham, who discovered and excavated this Stupa in 1873-74, says[38] that "the present village of Bharhut which contains upwards of 200 houses is built entirely of the bricks taken from the Stupa".

The example of the people of Bharhut was followed by the neighbouring villages as well. They dismantled a good number of pillars and Railings and carried away the same for building their houses. Cunningham discovered six pillars at the neighbouring village of Batanmara and eight at Pathora. He also discovered[39] a number of carved stones from the Railings of the Stupa in most of the large villages around Bharhut, particularly at Uchahara, Batanmara, Pathora and Madhogarh (or Patharhat).

(ii) The Dharmarajika Stupa at Sarnath was dismantled[40] in 1794 by Jagat Singh, the Diwan of Raja Chait Singh of Banaras, just for the sake of bricks required for the construction of a market in Varanasi. This market is now known as 'Jagatganj". The Asokan Pillar was also broken.

(iii) About the well-known Amaravati Stupa in Andhra Pradesh, V.R. Narla, an authority on the Buddhist art in Andhra, says[41] "Most of the relics are now unfortunately lost. Even by the time of Col. Colin Mackenzie who saw the great Amaravati Stupa at the end of the eighteenth century, many of the sculptured marbles had been destroyed. They had been dug up and burnt into lime by a local Chieftan who in 1797 shifted his headquarters to Amaravati, the very dust of which was rich with history and hallowed by tradition, and made a feeble attempt to found a new city about the Amaresvara temple. And even those sculptures which escaped this vandalism are now widely scattered".

(iv) In 1840 the Buddhist Stupa at Gudivada in Andhra Pradesh was demolished in order to obtain material for repairing the high road between Bezwada and Bandar. Refering to this vandalism, Mr Rea says:[42] "It is to be regretted that all these works have suffered at the hands of those who required material for the construction of roads and other such works. Though among the oldest existing mounments of an ancient civilization, their great antiquity was no protection to them from the despoiling hands".

BUDDHISM ASSIMILATED

In order to meet the challenge of Buddhism, Hinduism soon began undergoing a change and transforming itself. In due course, it armed its system with good qualities of Buddhism both in theory and in practice. In this process of reformation, the Hindus adopted the ideal of Ahimsa and gave up animal sacrifices; and even began to organise maths on the model of the Buddhist monasteries. Further, to put a finish to the long and bitter wordy duel for supremacy by the adherents of the two religions, Lord Buddha was inducted into the Hindu Pantheon, as an Avatara of Vishnu. And this fact was given wide publicity by the authors of the Puranas. Besides the Varaha Purana, which says that as a result of the observance of the vow of the Buddhavadasi, king Suddhodana had as his son Lord Visnhu in the form of the Buddha. Lord Buddha has been hailed as an Avatara of Vishnu in the Matsya, Bhagavata, Garuda and Linga Puranas. Not only that, the Saivas adopted the Buddhistic monastic and contemplative elements, and the Vaishnavas adopted the devotional and humanitarian elements of Buddhism to ensure popularity with the masses. The Vaishnavas even modified

their attitude towards caste-system. They accepted it as a mere social institution, without any bearing on religion and spiritual pursuit. As says Dr. Radhakrishnan: "A gradual process of intellectual absorption and modification developed to such an extent as to countenance the theory that Mahayanism was only a sectarian phase of the great Vaishnava movement. The Hinayana, with its more ascetic character, came to be regarded as a sect of Saivism. When the Brahmanical faith inculcated universal love and devotion to God and proclaimed Buddha to be an avatar of Vishnu, the death-knell of Buddhism in India was sounded".

THE INTERNAL CAUSES

Besides the external causes, which were no doubt the principal causes responsible for the disintegration and disappearance of Buddhism, there were a few internal drawbacks or defects also which hastened its final disappearance from the land of its birth.

It has to be conceded that the Buddhists themselves were also responsible to a great extent for the sad fate of their religion. The Buddha had designed a Bhikkhu not only as a seeker of enlightenment through moral and spiritual discipline but as a social servant or rather a friend, philosopher and guide of the people also. Lord Buddha was the first religious teacher in India, nay the whole world, to exhort His disciples 'to go and wander forth for the welfare, for the gain of the many'. Again He was the first to set the ideal of renunciation, self-abnegation and service to others. He said that a Bhikkhu 'must beg for his food; must live on alms; must sustain himself only on one meal a day.' Following the teachings of the Master, the early Bhikkhus achieved the highest standards of piety, self sacrifice and service to others. This worked wonders and made the Buddha-Dhamma the most popular and respectable religion in India. But unfortunately, the latter day monks could not maintain the standards required of them. When the monasteries became rich and their chief activity came to be regarded as cultivation of academic studies instead of Dhamma-preaching, the monks lost close contact with the people, and the monk-upasaka relationship suffered a set back. The Bhikkhus became lax and inactive for all practical

purposes. This weakened the Buddhist religion. What was the condition of the Sangha in the closing years of the glorious chapter of Buddhism in India can be better judged from what Cunningham, the greatest archaeologist, explorer and scholar says in this respect. He says:-[43]

"Buddhism had in fact become an old and wornout creed whose mendicant monks no longer begged their bread, but were supported by land long since appropriated to the monasteries. The Sramanas and Bhikkhus were not like those of ancient days, the learned and the wise, whose bodily abstinence and contemplative devotion combined with practical exhortations and holy example, excited the pious wonder of the people. The modern Buddhists had relapsed into an unadolent and corrupt body, whc were content to spend a passive existence in the monotonous routine of monastic life-- there were still some outward signs of religion; but there was no fervent enthusiasm in the lifeless performance of such monotonous routine and the ardent zeal which once burned in the heart of every Buddhist monk for the propagation of his religion had long since become extinct."

In ancient days, the monks and the monasteries were the life-line of Buddhism. It flourished, so long as the monasteries were there and the monks were vigilant. Once the monks became letharigic and lost sight of the missionary work, Buddhism declined. And when the monasteries fell prey to vandalism, its downfall was complete. So much so even the sacred Buddhist literature, which was mostly preserved in the monasteries. completely disappeared from India with the destruction of the monasteries. The reason being that the Buddhists had no laity organisation for preaching, propagating and protecting their religion. In the absence of such organisations they helplessly looked on when the monasteries were plundered, looted and desecrated and the monks were expelled or killed.

The lack of distinct and specific Buddhist customs and rites for social ceremonies like marriage, etc. was another factor which facilitated the decline of Buddhism in India. The Buddha opposed ritualism, as also the monopoly of the Brahmins as priest class, but did not allow the monks to officiate as priests at the social ceremonies. Nor any specific ceremonies for birth, marriage, etc. were prescribed. Thus the laity continued to practise the current customs and ceremonies, prescribed largely

by the Brahmins. "This non-interfering attitude of Buddhism", as says[44] Dr. Joshi "though helped the smooth spread of the religion, resulted in the long run in lessening its hold on society."

Another internal cause which paved the way for the ultimate decline of Buddhism were the extreme hospitality shown by the enthusiastic Mahayanists to the Hindu superstitions, who in order to popularise their faith not only multiplied and divinised the Buddha but also inducted certain Hindu gods and goddesses in the Buddhist pantheon, in the shape of Bodhisattvas for the sake of personificating the various powers of the Buddha. As this made the Buddhist pantheon indistinguishable, except in name, from the Hindu divinities, the differences between the two religions were obliterated. And when Hinduism inducted Buddha in its pantheon to show as if Buddhism was one of its sects, Buddhism lost its identity.

SUMMING UP

The lack of royal patronage could be regarded as another cause which hastened the decline of Buddhism. For instance, it took more than 200 years for Buddhism to take firm roots and assume the shape of a mighty social movement of emanicipation in the land of its birth. This happened with the emergence of Asoka in the third century BC. However, within fifty years of Asoka's death in 232 BC the Mauryan Empire crumbled and Buddhism lost royal patronage which was regained only after 300 years with the rise of Kanishka in AD 78. With the decline of Kushana rule in AD second century, Buddhism again lost royal patronage. The post-Kushana period witnessed intense political turmoil which ultimately led to the rise of the Imperial Guptas of Magadha. The Gupta rulers were up-holders of Brahminism and their reign was marked by the revival of Brahminical religion. The last powerful royal patron of Buddhism was Harsha who came to power in AD 606, that is, after 500 years of Kanishka. After his death in AD 647, Buddhism again lost royal patronage which was never to be regained on a vast scale. Once the royal patronage was gone, and in fact was replaced by royal and religious persecution, the citadel of Buddhism crumbled sooner than expected. And whatever was left unfinished by the Hindu reactionaries was accomplished by the Muslim fanatics. As

a writer puts it "The last scene of the Buddhist drama in the theatre of its homeland, began in terror and ended in silence, the silence of the forgotten. The holy places fell into decay, overgrown by jungle, their shrines converted to another faith. The Buddha disappeared into the vast assemblage of the Hindu gods and from the memory of man".

Whatever may be the reasons that led to the decline and disappearance of Buddhism from India, one thing is certain that it was most unfortunate that the religion of the Buddha, the first world religion, should have lost its hold on its parent adherents. That for this happening, India had to pay a very heavy price is a historical truth. India prospered till Buddhism was a 'living religion' and when Buddhism declined, India lost her freedom, her prestige suffered a set back, and her further progress was hampered.

4

BUDDHIST LITERATURE

PALI CANON

The Buddhist scriptures are in Pali. The word 'Pali' means simply 'text' or 'sacred text'. As a language, Pali is an archaic Prakrit, and in the days of the Buddha it was the spoken language of Magadha and adjoining territories. Since Lord Buddha spoke in Pali, the Pali Canon is regarded as the most authentic version of the Buddha-Word.

The Pali Canon was first of all compiled by the First Buddhist Council held at Rajagriha, soon after the Maha-parinirvana of the Buddha, under the Presidentship of Maha Kassapa. At this Council, Ananda, personal attendant of the Buddha for over twenty years, recited the entire Sutta-Pitaka, and Upali was mainly responsible for reciting the Vinaya. A hundred years later, the scriptures were rehearsed by the Second Council held at Vaisali. They were further edited by the Third Council held at Patna (Pataliputra), under the Presidentship of Moggaliputta Tissa. The honour of compiling the Pali Canon in the form of books goes to Sri Lanka where a Council was held for this purpose in the first century BC. The honour of preserving the same safely also goes to Sri Lanka, though it was lost by India, its original homeland.

Till recently, India did not possess the Pali scriptures

in any modern script. Thanks to the co-operation of the Government of India and Government of Bihar, India now has the entire Pali Canon in Devanagari script. The Tripitaka in Devnagari has been prepared and published by the Pali Publication Board, Nalanda under the General Editorship of Venerable Jagdish Kashyap. The 41 volumes of about 400 pages each in Devnagari have been prefaced with a brief introduction in Hindi and English.

The Pali Canon is commonly referred to as Tipitaka (Skr: Tripitaka), i.e. 'Threefold Basket'. The three Pitakas or 'Baskets of the Law' are:

1. The Vinaya-Pitaka or Discipline Basket.
2. The Sutta-Pitaka or Sermon Basket.
3. The Abhidhamma or Teaching Basket.

The Vinaya Pitaka- comprises of Sutta Vibhanga (Parajika and Pacittiya), Khandhakas (Maha Vagga and Culla Vagga) and Parivara. It mainly deals with 227 rules of conduct which the Buddha promulgated, as occasion arose, for the future discipline of the order of monks (Bhikkhus) and 311 rules for nuns (Bhikkhunis). It describes in detail the gradual development of the Sangha. An account of the life and ministry of the Buddha is also given. It also reveals some important and interesting aspects of ancient Indian history, customs, traditions and arts, etc.

The Sutta Pitaka consists chiefly of discourses, delivered by the Buddha on various occasions. There are also a few discourses delivered by some of His distinguished disciplies such as Sariputta, Moggallana and others included in it. The sermons embodied therein serve as moral guides. The Sutta Pitaka is divided into five Nikayas (groups or collections).

The Digha-Nikaya "long collection" has 34 long sermons arranged in three vaggas or series, called the Silakkhandhavagga, the Mahavagga and the Pathikavagga.

The Majjhima Nikaya is the collection of middle length sermons. It has 152 Suttas which are arranged in fifteen vaggas, roughly classified according to subject.

The Samyutta Nikaya 'collection of suttas divided into groups' has in all 2941 suttas, classed in 56 Samyuttas in the five series or vaggas.

The Anguttara Nikaya has eleven Nipatas (groups). Each Nipata is divided into vaggas, which contain ten or more Suttas. The 'anga 'uttar' means 'one number

in addition'. Thus the first Nipata deals with single things and is followed by groups of two and so on, upto group eleven. The Anguttara Nikaya (Book of Gradual Sayings) has 2308 suttas divided into 174 vaggas.

The Khuddaka Nikaya "collection of short texts" contains the following fifteen independent books:-

(i) *Khuddaka-Patha* - appears to have been compiled to serve as a hymn book for daily worship.

(ii) *Dhammapada* - is a collection of 423 stanzas grouped in 26 vaggas, covering all aspects of Buddhist ethics and philosophy.

(iii) *Udana* is an utterance that a saint utters in the bliss of his emancipation or in appreciation of a sublime state. This book contains 80 such utterances of the Buddha.

(iv) *Itivuttaka* - is a collection of 112 short suttas. All the suttas are introduced by "Thus has been said by the Blessed one, thus I have heard.'

(v) *Sutta Nipata* - has 73 suttas, divided into five vaggas, in verse with occasional introductions. Some of the suttas are the most beautiful in the entire Buddhist literature.

(vi) *Vimana-Vatthu* - has 85 poems in which beings who have been reborn in the heaven explain the acts of merit that led to their reward.

(vii) *Peta-Vatthu* - This book has 51 poems which are the stories of Petas or the beings condemned for their former misdeeds to a wretched existence as ghosts and evil spirits.

(viii) *Thera-gatha* - This book has verses expressing joy over spiritual accomplishments by 264 monks (Bhikkhus).

(ix) *Theri-gatha* - A similar collection of poetic expressions by about 100 nuns (Bhikkhunis).

(x) *Jataka* - A collection of 547 stories of the previous existence of the Buddha. The introductory part of the commentary, known as the Nindana-Katha, gives a life sketch of the Buddha down to the presentation of the Jet avana monastery at Sravasti.

(xi) *Niddesa* - It has two parts (i) Maha-Niddesa, a commentary on the Atthaka-vagga of the Sutta-Nipata, and (ii) Culla-Niddesa, a commentary on the Parayana-vagga and Khaggavisana-

Sutta of the same work.

(xii) *Patisambhida-magga* - It contains an analysis of various concepts, knowledge, the practice of breathing in meditating, etc.

(xiii) *Apadana* - A collection of previous lives of the Buddhas and some Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis.

(xiv) *Buddhavamsa* - An account of the history of the twenty-four previous Buddhas as well as Gautama the Buddha.

(xv) *Cariya-pitaka* - It has thirty-five selected tales from the Jataka, in verse, to illustrate seven of the ten paramitas (perfections) attained by the Buddha.

The Abhidhamma Pitaka contains the profound philosophy of the Buddha's Teaching. It has the following seven books:

(i) *Dhammsangani* - It deals with the enumeration of the factors of existence.

(ii) *Vibhanga* - It consists of 18 independent treatises (vibhangas) giving further analysis of the factors of existence.

(iii) *Dhatukatha* In it the mental elements and their relations to other categories are discussed.

(iv) *Puggalapannati* - It describes individuals especially according to their spiritual attainments.

(v) *Kathavathu* - It gives analysis of the points of controversy among the eighteen early sects and their reputation.

(vi) *Yamaka* - It gives an analysis of psychological subjects arranged as pairs of questions.

(vii) *Patthana* - This gigantic work gives an analysis of the causation and the relationship of things in 24 groups.

The two oldest non-canonical Pali works are the Nettipakarana or Netti (Book of Guidance) and the Petapodadesa (Instructions on the Pitaka). These two works are ascribed to Mahakaccayana, who was one of the foremost disciples of the Buddha and is proclaimed as the best expounder of the teachings of the Master. These two works are regarded as a key to the Tripitaka. The third important Pali non-canonical work is Milinda-panha (Questions of Milinda) which covers almost all aspects of Buddhism.

The last important non-canonical Pali work is Visuddhimagga (The Path of Purification). This monumental work by Buddhaghosha is a compedium of the whole Tripitaka.

SANSKRIT SCRIPTURES

As Buddhism spread and more and more people took to the road to Nibbana, Pali gave way to Sanskrit. The Theravada schools by and large adhered to the Pali Canon. Of them, only the Sarvastivadins preferred Sanskrit to Pali and compiled their own Tripitaka in Sanskrit. The Sarvastivada Tripitaka more or less followed the pattern of the Pali Tripitaka. It had three divisions: Agama, Vinaya and Abhidharma. The Mahayana Buddhists as a rule preferred Sanskrit to Pali. Thus, the bulk of Buddhist literature in Sanskrit belongs to the Mahayana schools.

Like the Pali scriptures, the Buddhist Sanskrit literature was also completely lost by India. We are thankful to the Chinese and Tibetan Buddhists who preserved the same either in original or in translations. The Chinese have a large number of translations of Indian Buddhist texts. Buniyo Nanjio has listed 1662 texts. Another catalogue mentions as many as 2184 texts printed in 55 volumes of the Taisho edition. The Tibetans have also a large collection of Indian Buddhist texts numbering more than 4566. These are divided into two groups, namely, the Kanjur, consisting of 1108 texts, and the Tanjur, consisting of 3458 texts.

In India, a solitary discovery of Sanskrit Buddhist texts was made in 1931 when over 200 manuscripts[1] of the sixth century AD closely packed in a wooden box were accidentally found in a stupa at Gilgit in Kashmir. These manuscripts contain substantial portion of the Vinayapitaka of the Sarvastivadins, besides a large number of Mahayana texts. The texts discovered from Gilgit have been edited and published by Dr. Nalinaksha Dutt under the caption Gilgit Manuscripts in several volumes.

The following nine Mahayana sutras, also called the Vaipulya sutras (the elaborate teaching texts') are regarded as the most important:

1. Astasahasrika-Prajnaparamita, "Eight Thousand Perfection of Understanding". Highlights the supremacy of Prajna (wisdom).

2. Saddharama-Pundarika, "Lotus of the Good or True Religion", presents in a well-planned manner the devotional aspects of Mahayana Buddhism.
3. Lalitavistara- is an exhaustive life story of the Buddha. Originally it was produced by the Sarvastivadins but was later appropriated by the Mahayanists and elaborated to suit their purpose.
4. Suvarna-prabhasa, "Golden Lustre", expounds sunyata (voidness).
5. Lankavatara, "The Revelation of the Good Religion in Lanka (Ceylon)", describes the Yogacara doctrine.
6. Gandavyuha - primarily deals with the Bodhisattva's quest for enlightenment.
7. Tathagata-guhayaka - is a treatise on morality.
8. Samadhiraja-- teaches the attainment of supreme enlightenment by samadhis or meditations.
9. Dasabhumisvara-- describes ten steps by which Buddhahood may be attained.

The oldest non-canonical Sanskrit work is Mahavastu. It calls itself part of the Vinayapitaka of the Lokottaravadin school of the Mahasanghikas. This massive work presents Buddha's biography including many Jataka stories. Having regard to their doctrine that the Buddhas are "above the world" (lokottara), the life of the Buddha is told as an "Avadana" a miracle-story. In Avandana literature there are two important works. The first one, the Avadanasataka or "the hundred Avadanas" is a Theravada work and is divided into ten decades of ten stories each. The second work Divyavadana or "the Heavenly Avadanas" is a collection of legends which mainly draw on the Vinayapitaka of the Sarvastivadins.

For details of the Mahayana non-canonical works, please turn to discussion under "Sanskrit Scholars" in Chapter II.

CONTRIBUTION TO LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

India is a land of many races, cultures and languages. Before the arrival of Aryans in about 1500 BC, the original inhabitants of India whose refined culture and civilization has come to light through the excavations carried out

in Harrapa, Mahenjo Daro and a few other places had their own language. With the coming of the Aryans, Sanskrit, the language of the Vedas, came into prominence. In due course, it came to be associated with Brahmanical religion and its study was monopolised by the few Brahmins. In order to break the monopoly of the Brahmins and to convey His teachings directly to the common people, Gautama the Buddha eschewed Sanskrit and took up the spoken language of Magadha, which thereby acquired a literary dignity and became the common vehicle of communication in India under the name of Pali.

The modern languages of North India have reached their present form through a process which can be divided into three phases of Old Indo-Aryan (Sanskrit), and middle Indo-Aryan (Prakrit) and New Indo-Aryan (Bhasha). Pali has played a significant role in this transformation. How and when the modern languages came into being has been well summed up by Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji. He says "The period from about 600 BC to about 1000 AD is roughly the one of middle Indo-Aryan or the Prakrits, which may be described as that in which Sanskrit was modified by the masses of people in North India. In the Prakrits, there was a considerable amount of literary activity, and one of the Prakrits, Pali became the language of the Theravada Buddhists, i.e. the Buddhists of the Hinayana or Southern School at the present days. The Jainas wrote in Ardha-Magadhi speech of Mahavira, the last Jaina Tirthankara or Teacher and Leader. Prakrit later developed into Apabhramsa during the last five centuries of first 1000 years after Christ. From the various Apabhramasas, as they were current in different parts of North India, round about 1000 AD developed the modern Aryan languages of India, the new Indo-Aryan speeches".

The Pali literature and the Pali scholars have also influenced the Hindu and Jaina scholars in more than one way. According to Dr. L.M. Joshi,[2] "The Pali authors were the first to write hagiographies and traditional historical narratives. Some sections of the Mahavagga and the Cullavagga contain the earliest examples of what may be called Buddhist historical literature. The Buddhavamsa presents us with the oldest hagiographies of the Buddhist tradition. Parallel development of legendary biographies and hagiographies of mythical heroes and sages can be seen in the Mahabharata and the Jaina

Kalpasutra. The Jatakas and the Apadanas (Sanskrit Avadanas) remained a constant source of inspiration to future poets and religious authors who wrote in Sanskrit. The didactic material of the Puranas and the Dharmasutras contains much that can ultimately be traced to Buddhist moral teachings. This is especially true of the Mahabharata. The beginnings of the epic poetry, particularly of dramatic poetry, can possibly be traced to Buddhist akhyana poetry. The numerous dramatic narrations in the form of dialogues in Pali verses mixed with prose present us with the earliest forms of Buddhist akhyanas or so called ballads".

What has been said above about the contribution of the Pali authors and Pali literature is also true of the Buddhist Sanskrit authors and literature. For instance Asvaghosha (first century AD), the most famous Buddhist poet, dramatist and philosopher was the forerunner of classical Sanskrit dramatists like Bhasa and Kalidass. Similarly, Aryasura (fourth century AD), the author of Jatakamala, has been described as "the forerunner[3] of the poets of classical, chaste and ornate Sanskrit". Santideva in his well-known work Bodhicaryavatara provides us "the loftiest flights of religious poetry" which inspired many.

The Buddhists have also made substantial contribution to Sanskrit grammar and lexicography.[4] In this connection, mention may be made of Sarvavarman (second century AD) who in his work Katantra tried to build a new system of Sanskrit grammar; Candragomin (circa 500 AD) who wrote the Candravyakarna with an auto commentary (vritti) on it; Jinendrabodhi who wrote the Kasika-Vivaranapanjika, also known as Nyasa, a commentary on the Kasika of Jayaditya and Vamana; and Saranadeva who wrote a work titled Durghatavritti in which he simplified the difficult points in the Astadhyayi of Panini. The Buddhist writers also compiled Sanskrit dictionaries. "The most famous and earliest extant dictionary is the Namalinganusasana, better known as Amarakosa,[5] by Amarasimha who possibly flourished in the sixth century AD. He was a Buddhist, though he did not pay any special attention to Buddhist vocabulary in his dictionary. It is said that there are as many as 50 known commentaries on the Amarakosa. The last Buddhist dictionary writer to be mentioned was Purusottamadeva (circa twelfth century). As a supplement to the Amarakosa he wrote

the Trikandasesa. The Amarakosa is divided into three parts, hence its secondary title "Trikandi". Purusottamadeva follows this arrangement in his work which 'contains rare names of the Buddha and many words that are peculiar to Buddhist Sanskrit'. Another dictionary by this author is called the Haravali".

The Buddhists also made notable contribution to the development of other languages. In particular mention may be made of the Tamil language.[6] Three Tamil poets of the early centuries of the Christian era were Buddhists. They were: Ilam Bodiyar, Sangavarunor and Sat Ranar of the Sangam age (Ist-2nd centuries AD). The Silappadikaram and the Manimekalai, the two ancient classics in the Tamil language, were the creations of the Buddhists. And Sathanar, also known as Sittalai Sathanar, the author of the Manimekalai, was one of the greatest Tamil poets of the Sangam Age. A Buddhist monk, Nadagutta (fourth century AD) wrote the Kundalakshi, one of the five famous kavyas in Tamil. An eminent Buddhist scholar of Tamil language in the eleventh century AD was Buddhamitra. He composed the Virasoliyam, the Tamil grammar at the request of the King Vira Rajendra Chola (AD 1070). Perundevanar, who was disciple of Buddhamitra, wrote a commentary on the Virasoliyam, the Tamil grammar composed by his teacher.

Lastly, the Buddhists made significant contributions "to the literature of India was in the form of dohas or gitis (songs) composed by Buddhist siddhas in Apabhramsa". The Buddhist poets (siddhas) of the period from nine-twelfth centuries like Saraha, Kambala, Krsnacarya, Tailapada and Luyipada, in order to popularise their ideas among the masses wrote in the Apabhramsa Vernacular and in the then spoken languages of the Magadha (Bihar) and Vanga (Bengali) areas of the Pala Empire. This language seems to have been the mother of several modern Indian languages including Hindi, Oriya and Bengali.

In modern India, the Pali language came to life when in 1901 Satish Chandra Vidyabhusan became the first Indian to obtain an M.A. degree from the Calcutta University where for the first time the teaching of Pali had been introduced. Dr. Beni Madhab Barua (1888-1948) was another pioneer Pali scholar who contributed much to the Buddhist philosophical studies. The first modern scholar to introduce Pali in Devanagari Script was Prof. Dharmananda Kosambi (1876-1947). In 1902, he went

to Sri Lanka, took robes and learnt Pali at the Vidyodaya College in Colombo. His greatest work was the Devanagari edition of the Visuddhimagga which was published in 1940.

Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan (1893-1963), the giant intellectual and creator of enormous Buddhist literature, was the first pioneer Hindi scholar. Besides Buddhist literature, he wrote histories, scientific and philosophical books, travel records and biographies-- in all about 175 books and pamphlets. He was a great explorer also. Thrice he undertook the hazardous journeys to Tibet and brought back a large collection of valuable old Sanskrit manuscripts, some of which he himself edited and published. Rahulji's efforts to fill the long felt need of Buddhist literature in Hindi, the National Language of India, were supplemented by his worthy colleagues namely, Venerable Bhadant Anand Kausalyayan and Venerable Jagdish Kashyap.

In the wake of the Buddhist rennaisance, Buddhist heritage came to be reflected in the writings of other Indian writers as well. Among a host of literary figures whose writings echo the Buddhsit themes, is Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, India's Poet Laureate and the Noble Prize winner.

19-7-1994

5

BUDDHIST ART

ON SITE

Asokan Pillars

Asoka's monolithic pillars, which dot the country, "represent the high water-mark of Mauryan achievements in the domain of the fine arts".[1] The quality of stone and the polish used in these pillars is simply marvellous. Their style and technique is unsurpassed and remains a challenge to modern artists and craftsmen. Dr. V.A. Smith says:[2] "The skill of the stone-cutter may be said to have attained perfection, and to have accomplished tasks which would perhaps, be found beyond the powers of the twentieth century. Gigantic shafts of hard sandstone, thirty or forty feet in length, were dressed and proportioned with the utmost nicety, receiving a polish which no modern mason knows how to impart to the material".

A singular beauty of these pillars are the animal figures on their top. The animals generally patronised for this purpose are elephant, bull, horse and lion. These animals were patronised by Asoka because these are the symbols of Lord Buddha. The elephant stands for the Buddha's descent on earth as His mother, Mahamaya before conception saw in dream a white elephant entering her womb. The bull indicates Buddha's birth as a human

being as He is said to have been born when the zodiacal sign of Taurus, i.e. the bull was dominant. The horse stands for the Buddha's renunciation since He left home on horse back. The lion represents Buddha as the great preacher whose preachings defeat and silence all rivals. Four lions facing four directions indicate that the Buddha preached in all the directions and to all the mankind. Of the 14 Asokan Pillars discovered so far, ten inscribed pillars are at: Delhi - 2 (both removed from Topra near Ambala and Meerut by Sultan Feroz Shah Tughlaq in AD 1356; Allahabad (removed by Akbar from Kausambi); Lauriya-Araraj (with lion capital); Lauriya-Nandangarh (with lion capital); Rampurva (damaged-- its lion capital is in the Indian Museum Calcutta); Sarnath (damaged--its capital of four lions is in the Sarnath Museum); Sanchi (damaged-- its capital of four lions is in the Sanchi Museum), Lumbini (damaged-- its horse capital is missing); and Nigliva.

The best preserved inscribed Asokan pillar which still stands majestically in situ is the Lauriya-Nandangarh in Bihar. Its height above the ground is 39 feet 7 1/2 inches (32 feet 9 1/2 inches shaft + 6 feet 10 inches lion capital). When the curious archaeologists dug up its foundations, they found a length of 10 feet below the ground.[3] Thus the total length of this pillar is about 50 feet. At the end, the shaft was joined on to a square stone basement extending to a length of about two feet on its four sides. The height[4] of some of the other inscribed pillars above the ground is: the Lauriya-Araraj Pillar (36 feet 6 inches), the Rampurva Pillar (44 feet 9 1/2 inches), the Allahabad-Kosam Pillar (42 feet 7 inches) and the Lumbini Pillar (22 feet 4 inches). The Delhi-Topra Pillar is 42 feet 7 inches in length.

Four uninscribed pillars are at: Vaisali-Kolhua (with lion capital), Rampurva (damaged--its bull capital is in the Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi), Sankasya (damaged-- its elephant capital is preserved on site), and Kausambi (without its capital). Of these, the best preserved is the Vaisali-Kolhua Pillar which stands in situ to a height of 40 feet, including lion capital. Its total length is 44 feet 2 inches. When its foundation were dug up, a square pedestal was found at the basement. Its diameter is 49.8 inches at the base and 38.7 inches at the top.

In sum, the total length of the Asokan Pillars ranges between 40 to 50 feet. Their maximum diameter is about

50 inches at the base and about 38 1/2 inches at the top. Cunningham estimated that the average weight of an Asokan Pillar of the height upto 50 feet and circumference up to 50 inches will be about 50 tons. How strenuous the task of Asoka's engineers might have been even for transporting these mighty pillars to various sites throughout India is well illustrated by the story of the pillar which now stands at Ferozshah Kotla in Delhi. This pillar was at Topra, a village near Ambala. Sultan Ferozshah Tughlaq (1351-88 AD) ordered it to be removed to Delhi. To accomplish this task, a special carriage with 42 wheels was made. With each wheel a rope was fastened which was pulled by 200 men. Thus about 8400 men were deployed to fetch this pillar to Delhi. To quote Smith again: "When labour so great was required to move one a distance of 120 miles, we may imagine how much energy was expanded in setting up thirty pillars, some of which were much heavier than that removed by Firozshah, and were transported to distances still greater".[5]

The Great Maha Bodhi Temple

The Great Maha Bodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya, the Seat of Buddha's Enlightenment, has all along been regarded as the symbol of Buddhism in India. The first temple to be built at this sacred site was by Asoka in the third century BC. The present Maha Bodhi Temple was built in the second century AD. The Temple was repaired, renovated and embellished from time to time by the devout Buddhists in the following centuries. Hiuen Tsang saw it in AD 637 and gives a vivid description of the Temple. He says:[6] "To the East of the Bodhi tree, there is a vihara about 160 or 170 feet high. Its lower foundation-wall is 20 or more paces in its face. The building (pile) is of blue tiles (bricks) covered with Chunam (burnt stone lime); all the niches in the different storeys hold golden figures. The four sides of the building are covered with wonderful ornamental work; in one place figures of stringed pearls (garlands), in another figures of heavenly Rishis".

When Buddhism declined in India, Bodh Gaya was deserted by the Buddhists, and the Temple became more and more ruinous. Taking advantage of the situation, a Hindu Mahant established his Math at Bodh Gaya in AD 1590. With the coming of the Mahant, the holy Buddhist shrine passed into the hands of non-Buddhists

and the phase of its sacrilege began. When Dr. Buchanan Hamilton visited Bodh Gaya in 1811, he found the Maha Bodhi Temple in utter ruins. Fifty years later, in 1861, Cunningham found the Mahant and his followers indulging in all sorts of un-Buddhistic ceremonies in the main shrine. Further, though the Mahant claimed the Temple and land around it as his own property yet he took no steps to repair the decaying historic temple.

In 1875, King Mindan Min of Burma, sought and obtained the permission of the Government of India and the Mahant, to repair the decaying Maha Bodhi Temple. As the repairs initiated by the Burmese were not proceeding on right lines, the Government of India appointed in 1880 J.D. Beglar to make thorough repairs of the building. General Cunningham and Dr. Rajendra Lal Mitra were also deputed to supervise the repairs. The restoration was done on the basis of a small model in stone found among the ruins from which the whole design of the building as it existed in mediaeval times could be traced with tolerable completeness. The restoration and renovation of the Maha Bodhi Temple to its present condition, almost an exact replica of the original shrine, was a lengthy affair but was accomplished with rare devotion and dedication by Beglar.

The Maha Bodhi Temple,[7] as it now stands, is approximately 170 feet high, while its base is 50 feet square. It consists of a straight pyramidal tower surmounted by a stupa. Its entrance porch, comparatively later than the original Temple, is on the East. Each of the four sides of the tower presents several tiers of niches, while the front face has a tall lancet opening for the admission of light into the sanctum and at the base of the tower there rises a turret at each of the four corners a miniature replica of the main spire. The Temple is built of bluish bricks, with a coating of plaster. In front of the main entrance there is an imposing gateway decorated with delicate carvings. In front of the gateway is an elegant stone votive stupa of small proportions. The niches on both sides of the main entrance to the Temple contain images of the Buddha. The central shrine room of the Temple, which is situated at the ground floor is reached after passing through a vaulted passage. The pillars and the main door are made of stone.

The great gilded image of the Buddha, in the earth touching attitude symbolizing the supreme event of

Englightenment, is enshrined in the main sanctum at the base.

The upper storey of the temple is reached by means of two steep stone staircases on either side of the outer hall near the entrance. On the first floor one can walk right round the main tower as there is a wide and open promenade. At the four corners of this floor, there are four smaller towers which add much to the symmetry and grandeur of the whole structure. On the two landings, there are two large images of the Buddha. The parapet along the passage contains numerous votive stupas, some of which are exquisitely carved and those in the East are the best. Under the main tower on the first floor is a fairly large shrine with a Bodhisattva image installed on the altar.

The outer side of the Maha Bodhi Temple has innumerable niches, carvings, creepers and images. The main niche on the West wall contains an unusually fine image of the Buddha which has been gilded by the Tibetans. The best view of the Temple may be had from the North.

The sacred Bodhi Tree sitting under which Siddhartha had attained Supreme Enlightenment is situated to the West of the Temple. The Vajrasana (Diamond Throne) seen between the Bodhi Tree and the Temple marks the actual spot sitting where Siddhartha attained supreme enlightenment. The holy seat is now marked by a rec sandstone slab, which is 7 feet 6 inches long and 4 feet 3 inches broad and 3 feet high. The Vajrasana was unearthed during repairs in 1881.

The site of Buddha's Promenade (Cankamana) alsc known as "shrine of the Jewel walk", is along the Northerr side of the Temple. The footsteps of the Buddha are represented by lotus flowers on a narrow masonry platform about 53 feet long, 3 feet 6 inches broad anc a little more than 3 feet high.

The Buddha Gaya Temple has also a number of interesting and historical bas-reliefs and carvings on the olc Diamond-Throne, some of the pillars of Jewel-walk shrine, the old Sandstone Railing and the later granite additions to the Railing. Majority of these bas-reliefs and carvings date from the first century BC and they cover both religious and secular topics. The religious subjects treatec are:-

(1) The birth of the Buddha at Lumbini.

(2) Four slightly different representations of Buddha's Enlightenment at Bodh Gaya.
(3) Six slightly different representations of Buddha's First Sermon at Sarnath.
(4) Eight different representations of the Mahaparinirvana of the Buddha at Kusinara.
5) The following four incidents of the Buddha's present life are also depicted:-
   (a) Purchase of Jetavana by Anathapindika of Sravasti for dedication to the Buddha.
   (b) The visit of the heavenly ministrel Panchasikha deputed by Sakra to make an appointment with Buddha (Sakkapanca-Sutta, Digha-Nikaya),
   (c) The homage to Buddha by the Naga-king Elapatra.
   (d) The Buddha and a ploughman (of Sravasti).
(6) 18 Jatakas (stories of the past lives of the Buddha) are also depicted.
(7) The secular reliefs discovered at Bodh Gaya are of astronomical representations of:
   1. The Sun (Surya), 2. Twelve signs of the Solar Zodiac (Rasi-Chakra), and 3. The Lunar Asterisms (Nakshataras).

THE GREAT SANCHI STUPA

The Stupa (Pali: Thupa), which literally means a heap or mound, is the earliest form of Buddhist monument. The Stupas are of thee kinds: *Sarirka* stupas raised over body relics, *Uddesika* stupas built as commemorative monuments; and *Paribhogika* stupas erected over the articles, like the bowl, the sanghati used by Lord Buddha. The earliest and the grandest Stupa, which survives till today, is the Great Sanchi Stupa. It was first built by Asoka in the third century BC.

The Asokan Stupa was extensively damaged by the opponents of Buddhism following the break-up of the Mauryan Empire in BC 185. However, it was soon rebuilt by the devout Buddhists of Vedisa, and others in the country. While doing so, its scope was enlarged to nearly twice its previous size. The elaborately carved four gateways (torans) were added by the devotees in the first century BC. The last addition made to the Great Stupa

was in about AD 450 when four images of the Buddha, each seated under a pillard canopy were installed against the walls of the Stupa facing the four entrances.

The Sanchi shrines were deserted by the Buddhists in the thirteenth century AD. In due course, they were engulfed by jungle and completely forgotten till they were discovered by General Taylor in 1818, who found Stupas 1, 2 and 3 intact. In the following years, however, these monuments were damaged to a large extent by the archaeologists and treasure-hunters. An effort to repair and restore the Great Stupa was made by Major Cole in 1881 who succeeded in filling up the breach in the dome of the Stupa and setting up its fallen West and South Gateways.

The diameter of the Great Stupa[8], as it stands today, is about 120 feet and its height, excluding the railing and umbrella, is about 50 feet. It consists of an almost hemispherecal dome, truncated near the top and crowned by a triple umbrella set at the centre of a heavy masonry pedestal, within a square railing. A high circular battered terrace approached by a double stairway on the South and meant for circumambulation is built against the base. At the ground level, the balustrade made of stone encloses the dome and the terrace; it has access from the cardinal directions through four gateways.

In the bas-reliefs on the gateways of the Sanchi Stupa scenes from the life of the Buddha find a prominen place. Here the Buddha is not represented in human form only certain symbols such as horse without a rider bu with an umbrella held above, throne, wheel, foot-prints trees commemorate His presence. On the summit o the gateway stands the emblem of Buddhism, viz. the Wheel of Law (Dharma-chakra), supported on elephants flanked on either side by a guardian yaksha and at the end by Tri-ratana-trinity of Buddhism- the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha.

The bas-reliefs on the Sanchi gateways can broadly be classified into five groups.

Scenes from the Life of the Buddha

There is no direct representation of Buddha's birth at Lumbini. However, the recurring lotus plant, either alone or with a female figure, seated or standing, often being bathed by elephants, is recognised as representing

birth. Enlightenment at Bodh Gaya is represented by a throne beneath the Bodhi tree (pipal-tree or Ficus religiosa). This theme occurs several times. First Sermon or Dhamma-Chakra-pravartana at Sarnath is represented by a wheel. It is either placed on throne or on a pillar. Mahaparinirvana of the Buddha at Kusinara is depicted by a stupa.

Besides the four great events of Buddha's life, 25 more scenes can be easily identified. These are: I. Maya's dream. 2. Four Drives or four ominuous sights of an old man, a sick man, a corpse and an ascetic. 3. Great Renunciation. 4. Worship of hair-lock of the Buddha by the Gods. 5. Sujata's offering of milk rice. 6. Svastika's offering of grass for making His seat under the Bodhi Tree. 7. Temptation and assault of Mara. 8. Buddha's Chankama-- after Enlightenment, the Buddha spent the third week in walking to and fro. 9. Jewel house-- where the Buddha passed the fourth week thinking out the Abhidhamma. 10. Muchilinda-- where Buddha was protected from the rains by the Naga King Muchilinda. 11. Tapassu and Bhallika-- on the last day of His seven weeks, Buddha was offered food by these two merchants who happened to pass that way. 12. Presentation of bowls-- by the four guardian deities for taking the food offered by Tapassu and Bhallika. 13. Adhyeshana-- the Gods led by Brahma exhort Buddha to preach His Doctrine for the benefit of men. 14. Miracle of the serpent--Buddha's victory over a serpent in a fire-temple at Uruvela. 15. Miracle of wood and fire - after Buddha's victory over the serpent, a sacrifice was arranged but without Buddha's permission wood could not be split, nor fire lit. 16. Buddha's visit to Kapilavastu. 17. Buddha's preaching to the Sakyas. 18. Buddha's residence at Jetavana built by Anathapindika, a wealthy merchant of Sravasti. 19. Miracle of Sravasti- Buddha performed a number of miraculous feats, including creation of a road in the air which he used for ascending. 20. Buddha's preaching under the mango-tree at Sravasti. 21. Miracle of Sankasya-Buddha went to heaven to preach the Abhidhamma to His mother. After three months He descended by a staircase at Sankasya. 22. Offering of honey by a monkey to the Buddha at Vaisali. 23. Sakra's visit--to the Buddha at the Indrasaila cave near Rajagriha. 24. Royal procession- King Prasenajit of Sravasti coming out of the city to meet the Buddha.

The Jatakas

There are only five representations of the Jatakas but the same have been treated in great detail. These are: The Mahakapi Jataka (no.407), West Gateway; The Chhaddanta Jataka (no.514), South, West and North Gateways; The Alambusa Jataka (no. 523), North Gateway; The Sama Jataka (no. 540), West Gateway; and the Vessantara Jataka (no.547), North Gateway.

Historical Events

Three events in the subsequent history of Buddhism portrayed on the Sanchi Gateways are:

Division of Relics: South Gateway, rear side, bottom architrave; West Gateway, rear side, top and middle architraves. After the Maha-parinirvana of the Buddha, there arose a dispute about the bone-relics of the Blessed One as there were as many as eight claimants. The relics were ultimately divided into eight portions, and were shared equally by the Mallas of Kusinara, Ajatasatru the king of Magadha, Licchavis of Vaisali, Sakyas of Kapilavastu, Bulis of Allakapa, Koliyas of Ramagrama, the Mallas of Pava, and a resident of Vethadipa. The vessel containing the remains of the Buddha was given to Drona who was instrumental in dividing the relics to the satisfaction of all. The claimants, on return to their respective places, erected stupas and enshrined their share of relics in them. Actual fight which is not recorded in the Maha-parinirvana sutta is shown on the South Gateway.

Stupa of Ramagrama: South Gateway, front side, middle architrave. Of the eight original stupas, Asoka is said to have opened up seven with the intention of enshrining the relics in the inumerable stupas erected by himself. He failed to secure relics from the stupa of Ramagrama as it was zealously guarded by the Nagas. To the right of the stupa is Asoka with his retinue, and to the left are the Nagas with their families.

Asoka's visit to the Bodhi Tree: East Gateway, front side, bottom architrave. Asoka's visit to the Sambodhi is known from his inscription. The representation at Sanchi shows the branches of the Bodhi-tree rising above a barrel-vaulted temple enshrining triratana, and Asoka supported by two queens. On the East Gateway, there is a circular pillard structure with open sides enclosing

the Bodhi Tree with Vajrasana at its base. Asoka is seen twice here. Once descending from his elephant and the second time proceeding towards the Bodhi tree with clasped hands.

The Manushi Buddhas: North Gateway, front side, bottom architrave; East Gateway rear side, top architrave. The symbolic representations of the six Manushi Buddhas (Previous Buddhas) find a prominent place on the Sanchi Gateways. The representations take the form of either stupas or Bodhi-trees which are different in each case. Thus Vipasyi, Sikhi, Visvabhu, Krakucchhanda, Kanakamuni and Kasyapa are respectively indicated by the patali, pundarika, sala, sirisha, udumbara and nyagrodha. On the West Gateway, along with this group, the Bodhi-tree (Nagapushapa) of Maitreya, the Future Buddha, is also shown.

Miscellaneous Scenes and Decorations: Miscellaneous scenes include several reliefs -- worship of the Buddha as symbolized by the empty throne or stupa not only by human and celestial beings but also by the animal world: glimpses of heavenly life; scenes entirely of a mundane character, depicting men and women given to pleasures and sports. Animals, with or without riders, dominate a number of decorative panels. Lastly, there are rich and exquisite floral motifs, treated with great delicacy and ingenuity. Noteworthy being the creeper of life, which often effectively combines isolated beings like birds, beasts and men with continuous stream of life.

While the greatness of Stupa I is on account of the marvellous sculpture on the gateways, the stupas 2 and 3 at Sanchi are important because of the body relics of some distinguished disciples of the Buddha discovered therein.

The Nirvana Temple

The Mahaparinirvana of the Buddha at Kusinara is profusely illustrated in Buddhist art. At the sacred spot itself, a number of temples had been built by the devotees. Of these, the main shrine was the Nirvana Temple. Hiuen Tsang, who visited Kusinara in about AD 637, says, "There is (here) a great brick Vihara, in which is a figure of the Nirvana of Tathagata. He is

lying with his head to the North as if asleep. By the side of this Vihara is a stupa built by Asoka-raja; although in a ruinous state, yet it is some 200 feet in height".

Kusinara continued to be a living shrine till about the twelfth century. Thereafter, it appears to have been deserted and in due course it was completely lost into oblivion. In modern times, it was Cunningham who identified in 1861-62 the Kasia ruins with the site of Buddha's Maha-parinirvana. Subsequently, in 1876, A.C.L. Carlleyle, Cunningham's assistant, carried out extensive excavations at the site and completely exposed the Main Stupa, and discovered right at its front the famous Nirvana statue of the Buddha buried in the debris of the ruins of an oblong shrine.

The present Nirvana Temple[9] at Kushinagar was built by the Government of India, as part of the 2500th Buddha Jayanti Celebrations, on the request of the Buddhists as the ancient temple restored by Carlleyle in 1876 offered practically no space for the pilgrims to circumambulate the shrine. The 1500 year old Nirvana statue, which is again being worshipped, is 20 feet (6.1 m) in length and is executed out of one block of sandstone mixed reddish colour probably from Chunar. It represents the Dying Buddha reclining on his right side, his face turned towards the west. It is placed on a 24 feet long brick throne with stone posts at the corners and once faced with stone slabs on all sides. The western side of the pedestal facing the entrance bears a sculpture representing three human figures, each carved in a shallow niche cut into a solid block of stone. It is difficult to identify the figures; however, the central figure may be that of the donor, Haribala himself, Right below him an inscription of AD fifth century records that the Statue was the appropriate religious gift of the Mahavihara-swamin Haribala and that it was fashioned by 'Dinna'. The reclining Buddha image is believed to be on the very spot where Lord Buddha breathed his last.

The colossal statue installed in the nearby Matha Kuar temple is 3.05 m in height, carved out of the blue stone of the Gaya region and represents Buddha seated under the Bodhi tree in the "earth-touching attitude" (bhumisparsa-mudra) which symbolises the supreme event of His Enlightenment. This statue is about 1000 years old, having been installed in AD tenth century. This statue was also discovered by Carlleyle in 1876. The

present temple was built in 1927.

The sacred site of Buddha's Maha-parinirvana, Kushinagar, is about 3 km South-West of the town of Kasia in district Deoria, UP. It can be more conveniently approached from Gorakhpur city from where it is 55 km by road.

BUDDHIST CAVE TEMPLES

Maharashtra

The Buddhists were the pioneers in the excavation of the rock-cut temples in India. Not only that, they in fact excavated the largest number of caves. Even today, there are over 1000 Buddhist caves in India. Of these, over 700 caves are in Maharashtra alone. The Buddhist caves are broadly of two types-- the Chaitya temple, a place of worship, and the Vihara, monastery-- a place of residence for the monks. The Chaitya has a vaulted roof and its entrance is topped by a large window; inside, it has a shrine or image chamber. The Vihara has a large hall for congregation and residential cells on three sides.

The early rock-cut temples in Maharashtra were devoid of the images of the Buddha. The stupa, originally in the open, was in these caves placed in the sanctuary as the primary object of reverence. With the advent of Mahayana, the stupa or dagoba was relegated to the background. Its place was taken by the images of the Buddha, which are found on the facade, on the interior walls and in the shrine chamber of the caves modified by the Mahayana Buddhists.

The largest monastic establishment in the early period was at Junnar. The distinction of having remained in use for the longest period of about 1200 years from second century BC to tenth century AD goes to the caves at Kanheri near Bombay.

In area, the four largest Chaitya caves (temples) are at Karla, Ajanta (No. 10), Ellora (Vishvakarma) and Kanheri being 525, 369, 348 and 317 sq metres respectively.

The best caves in Maharashtra are at Ajanta, Ellora, Aurangabad, Bedsa, Bhaja, Junnar, Kanheri, Karla, Mahad, Nasik and Pitalkhora. They cover over 1000 years of history and progress of Buddhist art from BC second century to AD eighth century. A brief description of these caves follows.

Ajanta

Of all the caves in India, the wonderful caves of Ajanta have attracted and aroused ,the admiration of scholars and tourists from all over the world. The Ajanta Caves are unique as they combine three best specimens of art: architecture, sculpture and painting. The growth and decay of these caves correspond to the rise and fall of Buddhism in India. The Ajanta Caves are the product of both the Theravada (Hinayana) and Mahayana Buddhists. The caves created by the early Buddhists were excavated during the reign of the Satavahanas (BC 200-AD 225). In this group are two Chaityas (No. 9 and 10) and four Viharas (Nos. 8, 12, 13 and 30). The remaining 24 caves (3 Chaityas and 21 Viharas) were added by the Buddhist devotees after a long interval during the period from AD 450-642. According to Percy Brown, "the construction work at Ajanta came to standstill in 642 AD with the overthrow of the Chalukyan king by Narashimhavaraman I, the Pallava king who forcibly removed all the skilled workers to work on the Hindu temples in his kingdom". This episode perhaps explains the reason for some of the unfinished caves at Ajanta. The Ajanta Caves are 106 km by road from Aurangabad and 60 km by road from Jalgaon, a railway junction on Delhi-Bombay and Allahabad-Bombay main line of the Central Railway.

The Ajanta Caves fell into desolution and ruin after Buddhism declined in India. They were covered with natural growth and lay buried in the jungle-clad slopes for more than a thousand years when they were accidentally discovered in 1819 by a pair of British soldiers who were on a patrol duty on the western mountain range.

The Ajanta Caves have earned world-wide fame as the beautiful and marvellous paintings have added lustre to the architectural and sculptural value of these rock-cut temples. As says Dr. Moti Chandra, "The fifth-sixth centuries wall paintings of Ajanta chiefly deal with the Buddha's life and the Jataka stories. The painters, however, have drawn copiously from the contemporary life and in that way Ajanta does not remain only a religious art glorifying Buddhism but provides a faithful record of the life and culture of the people". Yet another admirer says: "Ajanta is an epic. Out of a world of colours has

been created a glorious new world by the master-brain of the Ajanta artist. As the epic of Ajanta unfolds itself before our eyes, we see marching past us, processions of kings and queens, of princes and princesses, of soldiers and generals, of Brahmins and Bhikkhus, of shopkeepers and customers. We see men and women of every condition, in palaces, in simple houses, in gardens and in jungles, on hills and on the seas. The men and women are not alone. They are accompanied by celestial beings and spiritual beings".

Looking at the Ajanta paintings as a teacher of art, J. Griffiths says: "I find the work so accomplished in execution, so consistent in convention, so vivacious and varied in design and full of such evident delight in beautiful form and colour, that I cannot help ranking it with the same early art, which the world has agreed to praise, in Italy. For the purpose of art education, no better examples could be placed before an Indian art student than those to be found in the caves of Ajanta. Here, we have the art with life in it, human faces full of expressions, limbs drawn with grace and action, flowers which bloom, birds which soar and beasts that spring or fight or patiently carry burdens-- all are taken from Nature's book-growing after her pattern."

The setting of the Ajanta Caves is spectacular, a crescent-shaped gorge with a mountain stream girdling it. Great must have been the aesthetic sense of those who selected this beautiful site for the monastic sanctuary. Of the 30 caves at Ajanta, five (Nos. 9, 10, 19, 20, and 29) are Chaitya halls, and the rest are Viharas. All the Mahayana Viharas have shrines also. The best paintings are to be found in caves 1, 2, 16, 17 and 19. The best sculptures are in caves 1, 4, 17, 19, 24 and 26. The numbering of the caves has been done by the Archaeological Survey of India in consecutive order and has no relation to their chronological sequence.

Cave 1 is one of the finest examples of Vihara architecture evolved towards the last phase of excavations at Ajanta. The facade is lavishly ornamented, its beauty enhanced by six richly carved pillars. The verandah is 64 ft. 3 in. by 9 ft. 3 in. The ornate doorway leads into a big square hall 64 ft. by 64 ft. On three sides, there are rows of cells. Beyond the ante-chamber facing the entrance is a huge seated Buddha in meditation, whose expression changes according to the light and the angle

from compassion to peace and to smile. The Master's first five disciples and a wheel between two deers indicating First Sermon at Sarnath are also depicted in the panel below the Buddha. One central pillar in the right row has a curious carving done with remarkable realism, four deer in different positions have a single head which seems to belong to each one.

The paintings on the two side-walls of the ante-chamber present remarkable scenes from the Buddha's life in large-scale compositions. The one at the left depicts the scene when Bodhisatta was about to attain Enlightenment. For six years, the Bodhisatta practised rigid austerities and self-mortification. In the ultimate, he came to the Bodhi tree on the western bank of river Neranjara, modern Bodh Gaya in Bihar. There he sat cross-legged determined not to leave that place until he had attained the supreme and absolute wisdom. On the fateful night, when Gautama was about to attain Enlightenment, the Buddhahood, the Mara, the celebrated Lord of evil thoughts and evil passions, swung into action and attempted in various ways to thwart his efforts. But all the efforts of Mara failed, and he disappeared discomforted.

The temptation of the Buddha by Mara, the Evil One, is shown in the painting in detail. The Bodhisatta is surrounded by seven extremely charming damsels, the daughters of Mara. On the right side is army of Mara led by its general who looks enraged. On the left is a bitch with a crooked nose with a sword in her hand. Nearby is a green monster with the head of a ram. In the midst of all this, Bodhisatta is in deep meditation. He is touching the earth with his right hand calling it to bear his purity. Down below is Mara standing in despair.

The composition on the right wall is the "Miracle of Sravasti". Out of forty-five rainy seasons, the Buddha spent as many as 25 rainy seasons at Sravasti. It is said that the Kosala King Prasenajit or Pasendi who had become an admirer of the Buddha was confronted with a challenge, from his former co-adherents of the Jaina and Ajivaka faiths, to prove how Buddha excelled them in miraculous powers. The Buddha responded to the challenge and the result was the greatest miracle. In a series of miraculous episodes in the air, Buddha created multiple representations of Himself, seated and standing on lotuses and causing fire and water to emanate alternately from His body. In the painting at Ajanta, the Buddha has turned

Himself into hundreds of Buddhas in different poses.

The wall of the back corridor, to the left and right of the ante-chamber, contains two majestic Bodhisattvas which are among the Ajanta masterpieces. The one to the left is Padampani, with flower in hands. His eyes are lowered meditatively, his face has depth of spiritual calm born of compassion for all living beings. The other Bodhisattva, Vajrapani, is richly bejewelled. He leans gracefully against an attendant. A king offers him flowers.

Jatakas or stories of the Buddha's former births were told by the Buddha to recall his births as bird, beast and man. He recounted 547 tales of his former births. Each Jataka examplifies the Bodhisattva's efforts to develop virtues (Paramita) by doing good to others. In the paintings at Ajanta, 25 Jataka stories have been illustrated which demonstrate Bodhisatta's boundless generosity, his charity, compassion and wisdom.

The Jatakas illustrated in Cave I are: Sibi Jataka No. 499, Sankhapala Jataka No. 524, Mahajanaka Jataka No. 539, and Campeyya Jataka No. 506.

On the left of the main entrance is the famous Sibi Jataka. Once the Bodhisatta was born as King Sibi or Sivi and was reputed for his goodness and virtue. One day a pigeon, chased by a hawk, rushed to the palace and sought protection of King Sibi. The hawk followed the pigeon to the royal court and demanded that pigeon should be given back to him as it was his lawful prey. The king declined to surrender the pigeon and instead struck a bargain to save the little bird's life. He gave the hawk a measure of his own flesh equal to the bird's weight. The pigeon is seen here in the king's lap (extreme left) and on the right, beyond a pavillion, the king stands by a pair of scales.

The Sankhapala Jataka narrates how when the Bodhisatta was born as a Naga king Sankhapala, he allowed himself to be beat by the hunters as he did not want to break his precepts even at the risk of his life. As the hunters were carrying the serpent on their shoulders, a rich merchant, Alara, passing by that way was moved by compassion and saved the serpent by paying adequate compensation to the hunters. In the painting, the ascetic King of Magadha is seen preaching the Dhamma to Sankhapala, who is seated to his right on the ground on a cushion with folded hands. In the next scene, the serpent is being dragged by a number of hunters. Then Alara

is shown pleading with the hunters for his release. On being released, Sankhapala, in the last scene again takes human form and is asking Alara to come to his palace below the water tank. Both are shown near the tank.

The Mahajanaka Jataka depicts the story of King Mahajanaka who when still young decided to renounce the world. His mother, Queen Sivali, with the help of some beautiful young women, tried to entangle the king in the snares of passion but in vain. Then his wife tried to dissuade the king but she also failed to persuade the king to resile from his decision. Finally, Mahajanaka becomes an ascetic and sails in a ship which sinks on the high seas. However, Mahajanaka is saved by the daughter of the god Manimekhala. In the painting, King Mahajanaka is shown seated on the throne in a pensive mood. On the same throne by his side, is seated his wife, beseeching him not to go away. His mother Queen Sivali, two other ladies and two attendants are also shown. The dance scene is full of life. While the dancer is engrossed in her performance, two lady musicians are playing on flutes; two more lady musicians are playing on cymbles and one on the mridanga. In the last scene of ship-wreck, the prince is seated under an umbrella. The crew of the ship is looking at the sky in anxiety. A great fish is attacking the ship. On the right ship is shown sinking. And a man is being attacked by a sea-monster. Another is struggling with a shark.

The fourth Jataka painted vividly in Cave I is the story when Bodhisatta was born as a serpent-king who allowed himself to be caught by a snake-charmer as he did not want to break his vows of virtue. He was finally rescued by his queen Sumana by requesting King Uggarsena of Banaras to intercede on his behalf.

Cave 2, also a Vihara, is somewhat alike in plan to Cave I. The verandah, which is 46 ft. by 7 ft. 9 in., has a lovely painted ceiling. Among the excellent murals, one on the left wall of the hall, dramatizes the legend of the Buddha's birth with some vivid panels. According to tradition, Queen Maya, Buddha's mother, had a strange dream. In her dream, she was carried by the guardian angels of the four quarters to the table-land of the Himalayas where she was received by heavenly queens, wives of the four world guardians. Then she was taken to the Anotatta lake where they bathed her and robed her in divine dress, annointed her with perfumes and decked

her with divine flowers. Thence she was taken to the sacred hill nearby on which there was a palace. Here she was laid on a golden coach facing the east. As she laid her head on the pillow, she beheld a divinely looking white elephant with six tusks. In its trunk the elephant carried a white lotus. The divine elephant touched her right side and seem to enter her womb.

When Mahamaya related this strange dream to King Suddhodana, he consulted the astrologers, who predicted that the Queen would give birth to a son who would be either a universal monarch of monarchs or a Buddha.

Realising that the time for the birth of her child was coming nearer, Mahamaya sought the King's permission to go to her parental home in Devadaha, as was the tradition on such occasions. Mahamaya, seated in a golden palanquin, left Kapilavastu, accompanied by her sister Prajapati, and a great retinue. On her way to Devadaha, they had to pass through the Lumbini Grove, not far off from Kapilavastu, which was then at its best with numerous flowering trees and trees loaded with fruits. Enchanted by the pleasing sight around, the queen desired to rest for a while, and ordered the couriers to stop. Alighting from her palanquin, she walked upto the foot of a blooming Sal tree. Suddenly she felt the pangs of child-birth. She informed her lady attendants and they put round her a curtain and retired. While she was holding the branch of the Sal tree, the child was born.

While Mahamaya, attended by her sister Prajapati, washed in the nearby tank, the infant to the surprise of all stood up and took seven steps in the Northern direction. At each spot his foot touched, a lotus bloomed. And there was rejoicing in Heaven and the gods showered flower-petals on him.

In the panel above the cell-door, Bodhisattva Sumedha is seen in the Tushita heaven, resolving to take final birth on earth as Gautama. Queen Maya has a strange dream (bottom left panel), and the panel on the right shows interpretation of the dream at the royal court. The lower panel depicts Maya on her way to her father's place followed by the nativity scene in the Lumbini garden. Lastly, the new-born child walks seven steps over lotus blossoms while Indra, king of the Gods, holds an umbrella over his head.

The ceiling decorations in the ante-chamber and

the shrine are remarkable. One of the ceiling panels shows a procession of twenty-three geese rendered with great skill.

The Jatakas illustrated in Cave 2 are: Hamsa Jataka No. 502, Vidurpandita Jataka No. 545, Khanti Jataka No. 313 and Ruru Jataka No. 482.

The Hamsa Jataka gives the story of the Bodhisatta born as Golden Goose, Dhataratha, who lived with many wild geese on Mount Chittakuta. Once they came to the lake made by the king near Banaras. She and her friend Sumukha were captured by the hunters and brought before the king Bahupurakka and his queen Khema. They were delighted and fed the beautiful birds with their hands and freed them next morning.

The Vidurpandita Jataka is the story of the Naga queen who desired to listen to the learned discourse of Vidurpandita, the wise minister of king Dhananjaya Korabha who ruled the Kuru kingdom from his capital Indapatta (Indraprastha). According to the story, the Naga Queen Vimla, on learning about the wisdom of Vidurpandita longed to hear his discourse on the Dhamma. Pretending to be sick she took to bed and asked her husband to procure Vidurpandita's heart which alone could cure her. As the Naga king sat perplexed, his daughter Irandati approached him and learnt the cause of his trouble. On her suggestion, he promised to marry Irandati to whomsoever brought the heart of Vidurpandita. On knowing this, the youth Punnaka, a Yaksha, went to the Nagaraja, promised to bring the heart of Vidurpandita provided the princess was married to him. Having received this assurance, he rushed to Indapatta with a precious jewel; showed it to king Dhananjaya and lured him to a game of dice. The Yaksha Punnaka thus won Vidurpandita as a stake by defeating the King of Kuru in a game of dice; brought him to the Naga queen, and won the hand of Naga princess. In the painting princess on a swing, the game of dice, Vidurpandita's discourse, and happy union of Punnaka and Irandati are elaborately shown.

The Khanti Jataka or the Jataka of the 'patience preacher' is the story of Bodhisatta born as a hermit who was patience incarnate and endured all the persecution he was subjected to by the king.

The Ruru Jataka is the story when the Bodhisatta was born as a Golden Deer. He once saved the life of

Mahadhanaka, the son of a rich merchant of Banaras, who had fallen into the river and was drowning. While putting him on the road to Banaras, the Golden Deer asked him not to tell any one about his whereabouts. On reaching Banaras, however, the greedy man betrayed the trust, and told the King about the Golden Deer with a human voice. Thereupon, King Brahmadatta, accompanied by the merchant's son and a group of courtiers, came to the forest and captured the Golden Deer.

The caves 1-5 at Ajanta were the last caves to be excavated in the seventh century AD. Of these, caves 3 and 5 are unfinished. Both these caves are Viharas.

Cave 4 is the largest Vihara at Ajanta. The decorated main entrance leads to a hall with twenty-eight pillars. The shrine has a large image of the Buddha in the company of Vajrapani and Padampani. To the right of the door is the carving of the Litany of Avalokitesvara to whom devotees are praying for deliverance from the eight fears. This Litany represents the eight scenes of Buddhist prayer which invokes the Bodhisattava thus:

> "From the devouring fire, merciful one, deliver us;
> From the sword of the enemy, merciful one, deliver us;
> From the fetter of slavery, merciful one, deliver us;
> From drowning in water, compassionate one, deliver us;
> From lion and elephant and reptile and demon, great compassionate one, deliver us".

The Litany of Avalokitesvara has also been found in sculpture at Ellora (Cave No. 3), Aurangabad (Cave 7) and Kanheri (Cave 90).

Cave 6 is a two-storeyed Vihara, the only vihara of its kind at Ajanta. The door frame of the shrine is lavishly carved. There are a number of Buddha figures in various attitudes. In the shrine room, the Buddha is sitting cross-legged in the abhaya mudra. He is seated on a lion throne. Below is a dharmachakra with two small deer, one on each side. In the shrine room on the second floor, the Buddha is sitting cross-legged on a lion throne. Below are a dharmachakra and two deer. There are attendants on both sides. Flying asparas are also carved on both the sides of the Buddha.

Cave 7 is also a Vihara. Its verandah is 62 ft. 10 in. long by 13 ft. 7 in. wide and 13 ft. 6 in. high. In the shrine room is a seated Buddha. He is sitting cross-legged on a lion throne. On his two sides are Bodhisattvas holding chauries. The 'Miracle of Sravasti' is carved on the walls of the ante-chamber. There are a number of Buddha figures in various attitudes.

Cave 8 is one of the oldest viharas. It is simple in nature.

Cave 9 is a Chaitya hall excavated in the first century BC. The hall is 45 ft. x 22 ft. 9 in. x 23 ft. 2 in. There are 21 pillars. On the pillars standing Buddha figures are painted. There are a number of paintings inside the Chaitya, which are the examples of the earliest Buddhist art. The stupa in the shrine is hemispherical in shape.

Cave 10, an apsidal Chaitya, is the largest excavation at Ajanta, and the second largest in India, the first being at Karla. This cave is 369 sq. metres in area (29.5 metres in length and 12.5 metres wide) with 39 pillars.

This Chaitya hall is the earliest excavation at Ajanta. An inscription on its front indicates date as an early decade of second century BC. Of special interest in this cave are the examples of the ancient painting. Cave 10 has paintings illustrating only two Jatakas: Sama Jataka and Chhaddanta Jataka. These two Jatakas are also painted in Cave 17 and are described there.

The stupa in Cave 10 is the oldest and largest stupa or dagoba at Ajanta. It is in four parts. The base, the dome, the harmika and the trivarnika. Round the stupa is a circumambulating passage.

Cave 11 is a Vihara datable to AD fifth century. The hall is 37 ft. wide by 28 ft. deep and 10 ft. high. It has carved figures of the Bodhisattvas. The Buddha in the shrine is seated cross-legged. There is a circumambulating passage round the Buddha image.

Cave 12 is also one of the oldest Viharas at Ajanta. On the three sides of the cave are the living cells for the monks with stone beds.

Cave 14 is a simple Vihara. Its verandah, with six pillars and two pilasters in front, is 63 ft. long x 11 ft. wide x 9 ft. high.

Cave 16 is one of the most beautiful cave at Ajanta. An inscription of late sixth century AD gives its history: a Minister of the royal court had it excavated as a gift for the "best of ascetics".

The nativity story of the Buddha started in cave 2 is continued here on the right wall. Siddhartha goes to School and practises archery. He witnesses a ploughing contest and the sight of the tired toilers in the fields and the bleeding oxen prompts him to meditate about life's realities.

The masterpiece in this cave is a painting on the left wall, famed as "The Dying Princess". There is agony in the drooping, sightless eyes, the helpless abandon of the fingers, the farewell gestures. The emotion of the attendants beside the princess is well expressed in their faces and attitudes. The princess is possibly Sundari, the broken hearted wife of the Buddha's cousin Nanda, who left her to become a Buddhist monk.

In Cave 16, there are paintings illustrating three Jatakas. They are: Hasti Jataka, Maha-Ummaga Jataka No. 546, and Sutosoma Jataka No. 537.

The Hasti Jataka is the story of Bodhisatta born as a noble elephant who killed himself by falling from a great height in order to feed a number of hungry travellers who had lost their way in the forest.

The Maha-Ummaga Jataka is a very lengthy story. The episode illustrated here is the riddle of the 'son'. Once Mahasada acted as a Judge to settle dispute between an ogress and the real mother of the child as both had claimed the little one as their own. Mahasada (Bodhisatta) asked both the women to pull the child. He discovered the real mother in the one who readily gave in when she could not bear to see the child suffering such severe pain on that account. Other riddles from the same story, like that of 'Chariot' and 'Cotton Thread' are also narrated.

The Sutosoma Jataka narrates how a lioness was infatuated with a charming prince who came shunting to the forest. She licked the feet of the sleeping prince and conceived a child. When born, this freak, a boy, was brought by some foresters to Sudasa, who being childless brought him up as his son, and when he passed away, he left him as his successor. However, because of his maternal origin he was fond of raw flesh, and became a cannible prince. He was finally converted by Bodhisatta born as a prince in the royal family of the Kauravas and was named as Sutosoma because his face was as lovely as Soma (Moon).

Cave 17 also belongs to AD sixth century. Its entrance,

with the decorative panels and the corner projections, is considered to be "a thing of supreme artistic value".

A mural on the portico's right wall illustrates the subjugation of a rogue elephant, Nalagiri, at Rajgir, one of the eight great miracles attributed to the Buddha. Devadatta, the Buddha's jealous cousin, wanted to be named as Buddha's successor which the Buddha refused. In frustration, Devadatta tried to kill the Buddha and he set an enraged elephant against the Buddha. The elephant, as it came charging, stopped and prostrated itself in submission.

Inside the cave, there are paintings depicting Jataka stories, scenes from the life of the Buddha and some historic incidents. A large composition on the right wall is recognised as a great work of art. The story recounts Prince Simhala's conquest of Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Shipwrecked, Simhala with his five hundred merchants was cast ashore on an island of ogresses who enticed them in the guise of beautiful women. This painting treats realistically a line of boats ashore, a charming group of dancers, a procession of elephants and finally the coronation.

The back wall of the ante-chamber contains the excellent painting of "Mother and Child before Buddha". It portrays a touching scene at Kapilavastu during Buddha's first visit to home town. One day, when the Buddha was on the round, Yasodhara, his wife, pointing out to Rahula that Buddha was his father, asked him to go and ask for his inheritance. Rahula then went to the Buddha, and with much affection asked for his inheritence as a son.

The largest number of Jataka paintings are in Cave 17. They are: Chhaddanta Jataka No. 514. Vessantara Jataka No. 547, Mahakapi Jataka I, No. 407, Hamsa Jataka No. 502, Mahakapi Jataka II, No. 516, Sutosoma Jataka No. 537. Sarbhamiga Jataka No. 483, Matiposaka Jataka No. 455, Maccha Jataka No. 75, Mahisha Jataka No. 278, Nigrodhamiga Jataka No. 13, Sibi Jataka No. 499 and Sama Jataka No. 540.

The front corridor (left) inside the cave presents the famous Chhaddanta Jataka or the story of the six-tusked elephant. Once upon a time the Bodhisatta was born in the Himalayan region as an elephant, the chief of a great herd. He had two wives and happened to offend

one of them. With the prayer to be born as a fair maiden and to become the queen of Banaras, so that she could avenge herself, she pined away and died. Her wish was fulfilled. In her position of power, she commissioned a hunter to bring her the tusks of the chief of the herd. The hunter, having hit the elephant with a poisoned arrow, struggled in vain to saw off the huge tusks. Bodhisatta himself then came to the hunter's aid, pulled off his tusks and offered them as a gift to the queen. At sight of them, the queen was struck with remorse and died heart-broken.

The Vessantara Jataka tells how Prince Vessantara, the Bodhisatta, had great craving to give in charity whatever he possessed. One day, taking advantage of his generosity, eight Brahmins from Kalinga, where there was a severe drought, came to Vessantara to beg his white elephant. When he parted with the State elephant, who had the magical power to bring peace, prosperity and rain, the people pretested and the king had to banish him. His wife, Madra, and their two children also accompanied him in the chariot. On the way he made a gift of his chariot and horses to the Brahmins who begged for the same. Thus the family had to go on foot. Then another old Brahmin appeared and asked for the children, the prince gave them as well. This Jataka covers a great part of the left wall.

The Mahakapi Jataka I is the story of the Bodhisatta born as a leader of monkeys living in the forest by the side of the river Ganges. Once when some monkeys had gone to the other side of the river and were on a mango tree, they were surrounded by the king's men and had no way out to escape. Seeing them in danger the chief monkey jumped on to a tree, cut and stripped a length of bamboo shoot, tied one end to a tree trunk and fastened the other end around his waist, and sprang to the other side where he grasped a branch of the mango tree. On the reed bridge thus made all his followers crossed to safety. But as a result of strain the great-hearted monkey died.

The Mahakapi Jataka II is the story of an ungrateful peasant. Once the Bodhisatta born as a monkey saved the life of a peasant who had fallen into a narrow gorge full of water but was unable to come out. After coming out, however, the ungrateful peasant tried to kill the monkey when he was asleep.

The stories of the Hamsa Jataka and Sutasoma Jataka have already been described under Cave 16.

The Sarbhamiga Jataka narrates the story of the Bodhisatta born as a Noble Stag who rescued Brahmadatta, the king of Banaras who while chasing the stag had fallen into a pit and was unable to come out. In deep gratitude, the king vowed not to kill animals in future.

The Matiposaka Jataka gives the story of the filial affection of the Bodhisatta born as elephant who took care of his blind mother.

The Machcha Jataka narrates the legend of the Bodhisatta born as a fish who saved his kin from death by drought by making a solemn asseveration to bring down rain.

The Mahisha Jataka is the story of the Bodhisatta born as a buffalow who patiently put up with the pranks of a wicked monkey.

The Nigrodhamiga Jataka is the story when Bodhisatta was born as King Banyan Deer and lived in the forest near Banaras. Out of compassion, he offered himself as a substitute to be killed in place of a doe to feed the king of Banaras.

The Sibi Jataka illustrated here gives the story of King Sibi who gladly gave his eyes to a blind Brahmin at his request, little knowing that it was god Sakka himself. Later Sakka, the king of gods, used his super-natural power and restored the king's eye sight.

The Sama Jataka depicts the story when Bodhisatta was born as Sama, the sole support of his parents. He was accidentally killed while filling water at a river, by the arrow of the king of Banaras who was on a hunting expedition. Learning the pitiable condition of Sama's parents, the king prayed to his deity who not only restored Sama to life, but also restored the eye sight of his parents.

Cave 19, a Chaitya-hall of the late Mahayana period, has an exquisitely carved facade with many large Buddha figures in relief. The great arched window adds to its grandeur. The interior has number of Buddha images. Boldly conceived and superbly executed in minute detail, this chapel is regarded as one of the best examples of Buddhist art. With its large number of stone figures, it has aptly been called "the sculptor's treasure-chest" The walls are painted with the figures of the Buddha in panels.

The stupa in Cave 19 is of cylindrical shape. It is

crowded with sculptures and decorative motifs. It has two tiered base supporting the dome. On the second base is a standing figure of the Buddha in abhaya mudra. On the harmika is a seated Buddha in the dharmachakra mudra. The three umbrellas on the top are decorated.

Cave 20 is a Vihara datable to AD fifth century. The verandah pillars have attractive sculptures. The shrine has the figure of the Buddha in the dharmachakra mudra. Below two deer and dharmachakra are seen.

Cave 21 is a spacious Vihara datable to AD sixth century. Its hall is 51 ft. 6 in. x 51 ft. In the shrine, the Buddha figure is in the dharmachakra mudra.

Cave 22 is a small Vihara datable to AD sixth century. Inside the shrine, the Buddha figure in the shrine is in the paralambapada asana with two chauri bearers. On the right wall are some paintings.

Cave 23 is another spacious Vihara. Its hall is 50 ft. 3 in. x 51 ft. 8 in. and is 12 ft. 4 in. in height. It has 12 cells. This cave is incomplete and there is nothing in the shrine room.

Cave 24, though incomplete, is the second largest excavation at Ajanta. It is 73 ft. 3 in. by 75 ft. in size. The bracket capitals of its verandah column and the lintel of the door have beautiful figures. The shrine has a seated Buddha with usual attendants.

Cave 26 is a Chaitya excavated during the seventh century AD. It is almost as crowded with sculptures as Cave 19 but its Chaitya-hall is larger in size. It is 67 ft. 10 in. deep x 36 ft. 3 in. wide x 31 ft. 3 in. The entire facade of the Chaitya is carved with Buddha figures in different attitudes. The hall has 28 pillars. On either side of the Chaitya window is a figure of Kubera, the god of wealth and beyond it a standing figure of the Buddha. It has a colossal Reclining Buddha figure-representing Maha-parinirvana. The Buddha is lying on his right side with his right hand under his head. The Reclining Buddha is 23 ft. 3 inches in length. Ananda and Kashyapa are shown standing mourning his passing. In front of the bed are other disciples and Bhikkhus in grief. Above panel has devas scattering flowers. The same wall presents a relief of "Assault and Temptation of Mara", a theme seen in mural in Cave 1. On the left is Mara seated on an elephant and assaulting Gautama with his demon forces. On the right is Mara's retreat. There is another panel showing Buddha in the attitude of teaching, with

Boddhisattvas in attendance.

The stupa in Cave 26 is lavishly carved with sculpture. On the front of the base is a seated figure of the Buddha with his feet below on a beautifully carved lotus flower, supported by two dwarfs. On two sides of the Buddha are two decorative pillars supporting a carved torana. The flying figures of the gandharvas are also drawn. This stupa, like the one in Cave 19, is cylindrical.

Cave 30 is a very small Vihara and is one of the oldest excavations at Ajanta. It consists of a hall opening into three small cells with stone-beds for monks to sleep on. It has no pillars to support.

The remaining caves; 13, 15, 18, 25, 27, 28, and 29 are not of much interest.

Ellora

The caves at Ellora, about 30 km from Aurangabad, are a combination of three religious systems; Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism. The first 12 caves at Ellora are the earliest and were excavated by the Buddhists over a period of 200 years from 550 AD to about 750 AD. Unlike the paintings at Ajanta, sculptures, massive in size and superb in execution, dominate the Ellora Caves. They portray chiefly the Buddha, Bodhisattvas and other divinities and follow the accepted formulae of such representations. However, these being a late Mahayana creation, Hindu influence is visible. The notable Buddhist caves at Ellora are 2, 5, 6, 10, 11 and 12.

Cave 2 has twelve massive columns with cushion capitals to support the roof. The entrance to the main shrine is flanked by the Bodhisattvas. The huge Buddha image at the rear is seated on a Lion Throne with Padmapani and Manjusri as chauribearers. The galleries, however, have Buddha figures seated on lotuses in the traditional postures of a preacher with Bodhisattvas in attendance.

The lotus seat of the Buddha in the shrine of Cave 3 is supported by Nagas with their snake-hoods. There is also a carving of the Litany of Avalokitesvara where the devotees are praying to the Bodhisattva for deliverance from the eight fears.

Cave 5 is the largest Vihara, 35.66 metres by 17 metres, with twenty-four pillars. There is a seated Buddha image in the main shrine attended by Avalokitesvara on one side and Maitreya on the other side.

Cave 6 is notable for its ante-chamber which has several interesting sculptures. These include figures from Vajrayana pantheon. There is also a figure of the Hindu goddess of learning, Saraswati, well-known in India today in the same representation. The river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna are also carved.

Cave 10, known as Visvakarma, or the Carpenters' Cave, is the only proper Chaitya-hall at Ellora. Its facade, richly decorated, has the semblance of masonry work. A porch surmounted by a gallery leads to another gallery inside the chapel. The Chaitya hall, third largest in India, measures 26 metres in length, 13.4 metres in width and 10.4 metres in height. In the far end is the stupa 8.2 metres high and 4.9 metres in diameter. On this is carved a large seated Buddha, attended by Avalokitesvara and Maitreya, under a Bodhi Tree. Beside, the large number of seated and standing Buddhas, there are a number of images of the Bodhisattvas of the Vajrayana pantheon. There is also a figure of Prajanaparamita, a six-handed deity.

Caves 11 and 12 are large, three-storey Viharas alike in design and represent the peak of the earlier style at Ellora. Cave 12 is the bigger of the two and more impressive. Known as Teen Thal, it is a vast excavation. The facade nearly 50 ft. high plain and austere-looking has porches supported by pillars in each storey. Access of the ground floor is through a spacious verandah divided into three aisles by means of three rows of columns of eight each, making 24 pillars in all. At right angles to the verandah is another pillard hall having three aisles of three pillars each. At the far end is the shrine chamber having a seated image of the Buddha and other images on the walls.

The first storey of the Teen Thal is a large hall, 115 feet by 70 feet (35 metres by 21.33 metres) and 12 feet high divided by forty square pillars into five aisles. On the far side in the shrine room is the seated figure of the Buddha. There are figures of Bodhisattvas as well. The second storey is like wise a large hall. The shrine room is at the end of the central hall. The interiors of Teen Thal make a striking contrast to the undecorated facade for the hall in each floor has galleries of images of the Buddha and almost all the Bodhisattvas and their Saktis of the Vajrayana pantheon. On the rear wall of the main hall of the top floor are carved seven

Manushi Buddhas: Vipsayi, Sikhi, Visvabhu, Krakuchchhanda, Kanaka, Kashyapa, Sakyamuni; and seven Dyhani Buddhas: Amitabha, Akshobhya, Ratnaketu, Vairocana, Amogasiddhi, Vajrasattva and Adibuddha (Vajraraja). Among the huge Buddha figures, with Avaloketisvara and Vajrapani in attendance, the one in the shrine room of top floor, arms folded and the face deeply meditative, is most impressive.

Aurangabad

Aurangabad, the base city for Ajanta-Ellora Caves, has also 12 Buddhist caves. These caves are 3 km north of the city beyond Bibi-ka-Maqbara. The site is reached after a hard climb and the two groups are separated by a mile across the hillside.

Cave 1 is a Vihara of the seventh century AD. It has a 76 feet (23.16 metre) verandah with eight pillars. On the west is a Buddha on a lotus seat, supported by Nagas with their snake-hoods. On the inner walls are panels of the Buddha with Padmapani and Vajrapani. Outside the verandah, there is a row of sitting Buddhas.

Cave 2 also of the seventh century, is a Chaitya hall in which an enormous seated Buddha occupies the shrine, his feet on a lotus and hands folded in the attitude of preaching. There are also carvings on the walls, of the Buddha, Padmapani, Vajrapani and Manjusri.

Cave 3 is one of best developed caves in this group. It measures 25 metre in depth and 19.20 metres in width. Its verandah has a hall supported on 12 richly carved pillars. The two compartments in the side wings have elaborate carvings. The ante-chamber has two elaborately carved pillars. The shrine room of cave 3 has a large seated Buddha with Padmapani and Manjusri on either side. The side walls have two life-size groups of votaries kneeling in adoration before the Buddha, some offering garlands and other with hands clasped.

Cave 6, the first in the second groups, is a Chaitya-cum-vihara. It has ante-chamber and a shrine and also cells on three sides. Its shrine has a huge seated Buddha with Bodhisattvas in attendance and on either side kneeling devotees as in Cave No. 3. The doors of the shrine have carvings of Vajrapani and Manjusri as dwarpals.

Cave 7 is the largest and most decorative cave at Aurangabad. In this cave, the shrine is in the centre

with the processional path around it. To the right of the main door leading to the passage is a panel containing Manjusri, with men and women attendants. On the verandah's back wall is a panel of the Litany of Avalokitesvara (Padmapani). In each scene around the colossal figure of Bodhisattva, two figures seem to be praying to be saved from some form of danger. They are met by the Bodhisattva flying to their rescue. The eight dangers depicted are 'fire', the "sword of an enemy", 'chains of fetters (imprisonment)', 'shipwreck or water', the 'attack of a lion', 'danger from snakes', 'an enraged elephant' and the last 'death'.

The sanctuary of this cave contains a large image of the Buddha seated on a Lion Throne, celestial musicians and flying figures over his shoulders. On the right side of the door is another figure of Bodhisattva Vajrapani. On his right is Saraswati, the goddess of learning.

Bedsa

Bedsa, 7 km from Kamshet, off Bombay-Poona Road and about 18 km South of Karla, has 12 caves. These caves may have been excavated in the second century BC. The Chaitya Cave, the most important cave at Bedsa, is provided with very artistic front columns on the corners of which are carved horses and elephants with male and female riders. To the North of the Chaitya is a Vihara which is considered unique in design. The Mahayana Buddhists occupied these caves in the fifth century AD and added some paintings of the Buddha.

Bhaja

There are 22 caves above the village of Bhaja just opposite to the Karla caves, three kilometres from Malavli railway station. Bhaja is about 9 kms by road from Lonavla. These caves date back from the second century BC and are one of the earliest in India. The use of timber in the rock-cut architecture is a special feature of these caves. The Chaitya-hall (Cave No. 12) which is 18 metres in length 8.2 m wide and 3.4 m in height with 27 plain pillars is a fine example of early Hinayana temple. The stupa is 11 feet in diameter at the floor level, the cylinder is 4 feet high and the dome 6 feet high surmounted

by a two tiered box with place for relics and shaft of the umbrella. The roof is arched and ribbed inside with teak girders.

Junnar

Junnar, the second Satavahana capital, was the largest Buddhist monastic establishment in Maharashtra from about BC 100 to AD 300. Today, Junnar is a small municipal town in Poona district. It is 90 km by road from Pune and 140 km from Nasik. From Bombay, Junnar is 280 km by road via Pune and 185 km via Kalyan-Murbad-Maleshej Ghat-Madh-Udapur (State Highway No. 2).

There are 140 Buddhist caves at Junnar-- 131 Viharas and 9 Chaityas. (According to Owen C. Kail, if small cells for individual monks (bhikshu-grihas) are taken into account, the number of excavations at Junnar is about 400). The Buddhist caves at Junnar are scattered in the three hills-- Shivneri, Manmodi and Sulaiman-- within a radius of 5 km around the old town. The caves at Junnar include almost every variety of rock-cut temple but they are devoid of any human representation or Buddha images. The only ornamentation is by way of rail pattern. The Chaitya-- arch and animal figures on the pillar capitals.

The Shivneri hill, about 3 km to the North-West of the town, has the unique distinction of having Buddhist caves in the heart and an ancient fort on its top in which Chhatrapati Shivaji was born. Situated at a height of over 300 metres, the Shivneri fort is reached through seven gates, darwazas, built at different levels for security purposes. Sivabai's temple, which is at the level of initial fortification, is built in the hollow of a Buddhist cave.

Shivneri has about 60 caves in five separate groups around the hill. These caves were excavated in the first half of the second century AD. Some of the caves are quite interesting. Cave No. 26 is a two-storey Vihara. Cave No. 45, locally knows as 'bara-Kotri', has 12 cells for resident monks. The Chaitya shrine, cave No. 51, has an inscription of Virasenka, a merchant.

There is another group of 11 caves in a hill beyond the North end of Shivneri. These caves were excavated around BC 50 and are thus the earliest caves at Junnar. This group is now called Tulja Lena group as cave No.

4 has since been taken over by the Hindus and converted into a temple dedicated to Tulja, another form of Bhavani, the consort of Siva.

The Manmodi hill, ancient Manmukada, to the South West of the town beyond Shivneri, has about 40 caves in three groups. These caves date back to the first-second centuries AD. The central group of Buddhist caves at Manmodi is now known as Amba/Ambika Lena as in one of the caves therein, the Jains have added the figures of two Tirthankaras, and Ambika, the sasana-devi of Neminath.

The Lenyadri or the Sulaiman range group of caves is 5 km North East of the town, off the Junnar-Udapur Road (Bombay Road). These caves were excavated towards the end of the first century AD. Here the main group consisting of 30 caves is now called Ganesha Lena as one of the Vihara (No.7) is now the abode of Ganesha, a Hindu deity. In this group, Cave No. 4 is a small Chaityagriha. The next cave No.5 is a simple Vihara with a large hall 26' x 29' and 8' high. It has seven cells for resident monks. The adjacent cave No. 6 is the main Chaitya in this group. It is 40' in length, 22'5" wide and 24'2" 'high. It has rows of pillars on both sides, of which six carved pillars have on the capitals lions, tigers and elephants. The dome-shaped dagoba at the far end is 16'-4" high. An inscription in this cave tells us that it was "the meritorious gift by a distinguished resident of Kalyan".

The Ganesha Lena hall (cave No.7) is the largest Vihara at Junnar. It is 50'-6" by 56'-6" and is 10'-2" high with 3 doors and two windows in front and a stone seat round the inner three sides. It has 7 cells on each side and 5 at the back-- central one having been altered for the Hindu god (Ganesha) whose large image is cut out of the rock probably from a dagoba (stupa) that may have been there. In front of the cave is a narrow verandah, with six pillars and two attached ones rising from a bench as in cave 3 at Nasik.

Kanheri

There are 109 caves at Kanheri, near Borivli beyond the National Park, 42 km from Bombay. Majority of the caves at Kanheri are cells for the monks with a stone bench and verandah in front. The earliest excavations

at Kanheri were by the Theravada monks in the second century BC.

The main Chaitya (Cave No.3) at Kanheri is 317 sq. mts. in area or 26.4 metres x 12 metres and is the fourth largest in India. It is 15.2 metres in height and has 34 pillars. The stupa is about 5 metres in height and has a series of relic caskets along the centre of the drum. It was excavated in about 180 AD and was used both by the Theravada and the Mahayana Buddhists. Among the sculptures added by some Mahayana followers sometime in the fifth century AD are colossal statues of the Buddha nearly seven metres high at each end of the Verandah. There are also standing figures of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara and the Buddha on the front wall to the left of the Verandah. The sculptures on the front screen are of the donor couples belonging to the second century AD.

Cave No. 10 on the right side of the ravine is the largest Vihara at Kanheri. It is also known as the Darbar Hall as it was used as an assembly or convocation Hall. It has 12 cells in its Eastern and Southern wall. The cell opposite the entrance is carved with a seated Buddha attended by Bodhisattvas on either side. The inner assembly hall is 22.3 metres in length and 9.8 metres in width.

Cave 35 is one of the largest caves at Kanheri. It is about 14 metres x 12 metres, without pillars, with a bench or seat round three sides and with four cells. The Mahayana sculptures added later are on the inner walls of the cave and the Verandah. The seated Buddha is on the lotus throne, his hands in the Dharmachakra mudra. Padmapani as chauribearer is on the left side, attended by Tara. Another Bodhisattva and his Sakti are on the right. Lotus is held by two Nagarajas, behind whom are their wives and worshippers. In the Verandah, the Dipankara Jataka is sculptured.

Cave No. 41 has a representation of an eleven headed Avalokitesvara, said to be the only relic of its kind in India. Cave No. 50 has a panel showing Buddha preaching. Cave No. 90 has the largest number of Buddha images. It also has a fine sculptured litany of Avalokitesvara in his role as the saviour of the Eight Great Perils.

An interesting feature of Kanheri caves is the number of steps and paths some with hand rails, leading from one cave to the next. Another important feature is the system of runnels, cisterns and reservoirs, which provided

water to every cave.

Kanheri is the only place in India where monastic caves were continuously occupied by Buddhist monks from the second century BC to about tenth century AD and even beyond. This is evident from a Japanese inscription of a Buddhist pilgrim of the Nichiren Sect engraved on the walls of Cave No. 66.

Karla

The Buddhist Caves at Karla or Karle are about 12 km from Lonavla on the Bombay-Poona Road. Lonavla is 114 km by road from Bombay. The Karla caves are at a height of 150 metres and are reached by comfortable steps made by ancient Buddhists.

The arched Chaitya-hall is the most magnificent cave at Karla. It belongs to the first century BC and is the largest rock-cut temple in India. It measures 525 sq metres in area or 37.8 metres x 13.9 metres. It is 14 metres high and has two rows of 15 monolith pillars, the capitals of each are surmounted by well-sculptured men and women riders, seated on kneeling elephants, with their arms circling each other. At the further end of the temple is a huge dome-shaped stupa with places for relics and the beautifully carved umbrella. Its timber arches, which decorate the roof, are the finest example of the wood work of the early period. One of its own inscription tells us that the Karla Chaitya was regarded as the most excellent rock mansion in Jambudvipa (India).

The Mahayana Buddhists, who later occupied this Chaitya, added in the Verandah a few images of the Buddha, attended by Padmapani and Manjusri and other imagery in the fifth-sixth centuries AD.

Originally on each side of the facade, a little ahead of the entrance were two pillars about 15 metres in height. The pillar on the left stands on a wide cylindrical base, surmounted by a bell shaped capital on which were four lions supporting a wheel (now damaged).

The pillar on the right was destroyed due to land slide. The temple of Ekvira now occupies the place where this pillar stood. The temple of Hindu Goddess Ekvira is said to have been built in 1886.

Mahad

There are 31 caves near the picturesque town of Mahad, which is 205 km South of Bombay on the West Coast Road. The earliest caves at Mahad near Pale village belong to the first century BC. The images of the Buddha were added during the Mahayana occupation which continued till about the ninth century AD.

Cave I has a verandah in front 53 feet long and 8 feet wide. The inner hall is about 34'-6" deep and measures 57'-6" at front. The shrine has a sculpture image of the Buddha, with wheel and deer beneath, chauribearers at his side and Vidyadharas above. Cave VIII is 27' deep, 23'-9" wide and 9'-2" high and has a dagoba. Cave No. XV has also a dagoba of 4'-6" diameter. Besides a dagoba, Cave No. XXI has on its Northern wall a seated Buddha, with attendant Chauri-bearers and Vidyadharas, the latter holding a crown over the Buddha's head.

Nasik

There are 23 Buddhist Caves about 10 km South-East of Nasik on Bombay-Nasik Road. These caves are locally known as Pandavalena. The earliest caves at Nasik were excavated in the second century BC and they appear to have been in continuous occupation up to the Seventh century AD. The Nasik caves have a number of notable viharas and three of them (Nos. 3, 8 and 15) "have columned porticos, and large central halls, without pillars, out of which open the usual range of cells containing in most instances stone beds".

Over the door of the Vihara Cave No. 3, there are three symbols of early Buddhism, viz. a Bodhi Tree, a stupa and a Dharma-chakra, with worshippers on either side.

Cave No.10 is also a Vihara having a hall 12.5 metres wide and 14 metres deep with 16 cells and three plain doors. The pillars of the Verandah contain bell-shaped capitals. The frontage of the shrine inside had once the Buddhist symbols: stupa and Dharma-chakra, similar to those in Cave No. 3. Later on, however, when the Brahmins occupied the caves, after the downfall of Buddhism, the stupa and Dharma-chakra were broken and superimposed by the image of Hindu God, Bhairon, which is still there.

The hall of the Vihara Cave No. 17 is 9.7 metres deep and 7 metres wide. On the back wall, there is a standing image of the Buddha. An inscription in this cave tells us that this cave was got excavated by one Indragnidatta, son of Dharmadeva, a native of Sauvira country.

Cave No. 18 is a Chaitya and is probably the earliest excavation at Nasik. The Chaitya hall is 11.9 metres in length, 6.7 metres wide and 7 metres high. The dagoba (stupa) at the far end is 1.6 metres in diameter and 1.8 metres high.

Cave No. 20 is the largest Vihara; the depth being 18.6 metres. The Caves 17 and 20 appear to have been modified by the Mahayana Buddhists in the seventh century AD. The shrine room of Cave No. 20 has a large seated Buddha with Padmapani and Vajrapani Bodhisattva in attendance.

Pitalkhora

Pitalkhora is located in the Samtala range on the Northern fringe of the Aurangabad district. It is 78 km from Aurangabad on the road to Chalisgaon; some 80 km from Ajanta in a straight line and about 40 km from Ellora. It lay on the ancient trade route from Sopara and Nasik crossing the Indhyadri Hill on their way to Paithan.

Pitalkhora has 13 caves in two groups excavated between second century BC to first century AD. Of these, three are Chaitya shrines and the remaining Viharas. The main Chaitya (Cave No.3) is 24.4 metres long and 10.7 metres wide with 37 pillars. Cave No. 4, a Vihara is a novel construction. It seems to rest on the shoulders of a row of elephants.

The remaining Buddhist caves in Maharashtra are at Ghatatokach (3), Karad (66), Kol (7), Kondane (16), Kondivite (18), Kuda (25), Nadsur (19), Nenanvli (37), Shirwal (15), Shelarwadi (6), Thanale (23), and Wai (9). All these caves are simple.

Other States

Besides the Buddhist caves in Maharashtra, there are 325 Buddhist caves in the States of Gujarat (160), Rajasthan (150), Madhya Pradesh (9) and Andhra Pradesh (6). Here is a brief description of these caves.

Andhra Pradesh

At Guntapalli, 45 km from Ellora railway station in the West Godavari district, there are two Buddhist caves. They were probably excavated in the third century BC and are thus one of the earliest caves in India.

At Sankaram, a village 3 km North of Ankapalli railway station in Visakhapatnam district, there are four caves. Three of them have carvings of the Buddha and fourth has a stupa. The facade of this cave has a seated Buddha under a Chaitya arch.

Gujarat

The Junagadh group of about 50 caves is one of the earliest Buddhist cave temples in India. These caves were probably excavated in the third century BC. Some of the caves at Junagadh have two or three storeys. At Uparkot, the old fort of Junagadh, is a "two storey hall" which is interesting and impressive on account of its plan and decorative motifs and sculptures. The largest cave at Khapra-Khodia is locally known as Khajar Mahal.

At Sanah, 25 km South-East of Una railway station, there are as many as 62 Buddhist caves. These caves belong to the second century BC and are a plain type but have good number of tanks for water. The largest of them is locally known as Ebbal-Mandap and measures 21 metres x 18.3 metres.

At Talaja, about 48 km South of Bhavnagar, there is a group of 36 Buddhist caves. These caves are also plain and belong to the second century BC. Here also the largest cave (No. 30) is locally known as Ebbal-Mandap and measures 22.8 metres x 20.7 metres.

There are five groups of Buddhist caves at Khambhaldia in the rocky banks of a stream which later meets the Bhader river. These caves belong to the fifth or sixth century AD. In the Chaitya, the dagoba is flanked by three large sculptures of the Bodhisattvas and a panel of devotees.

Madhya Pradesh

There is a solitary group of nine caves in Madhya Pradesh, a few kilometres off the Indore-Ahmedabad highway near the small town of Bagh in Dhar district. Bagh is 176 km from Indore and 40 km south-west of Dhar. The Bagh caves belong to the fifth and sixth century AD and have been excavated out of a sandstone cliff at the foothills of the Vindhyas. Thirty feet below flows the Baghmati, a tributary of the Narbada river, which has to be crossed to reach the caves.

Due to leakage of water from the roof of the caves, these caves have suffered irreparable loss. Of the nine caves, only four caves have survived in a tolerable condition. The two noteworthy caves are 2 and 4. In the sanctum of Cave 2 stands a massive stupa flanked by the images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas carved out of the walls on either side. The images are about ten feet tall and in fairly good condition.

The Bagh caves are well-known for their beautiful wall paintings. Besides Ajanta, it is only at Bagh that such priceless paintings have survived. Hence their importance. The finest paintings at Bagh are in Cave no. 4, which is locally known as 'Rang Mahal' or the painted mansion. This cave is the largest excavation; its portico being about 220 feet long.

In its three sides are 27 cells with one double and one triple cell. Within the pillard hall, there is a secondary group of 10 masonry pillars. They are so placed as to form three ornamental porches leading to the aisles formed by the 28 rock-cut pillars. This design is repeated on the other two sides also. All the capitals are sculptured and some of the capitals are painted. There are numerous sculptured Buddha figures and the Chaitya arches. There are series of mural paintings of varying narratives. The walls, ceilings and pillars of the hall have a variety of floral and animal paintings. The Bagh paintings, though inspired by religion, are secular in outlook.

When Sir John Marshall, the Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India, visited the caves in 1920s, the murals and frescoes were in fairly good condition. He said "the paintings are a priceless treasure which no pains or expense should be deemed too great to save for posterity". It is, however, sad to note that the Bagh caves are dying today as the Archaeological

Survey failed to take adequate steps in time to preserve the marvellous paintings. A free lance journalist,[11] who visited the caves in 1984, says: "It is difficult to put into words the feeling one gets, the anger that wells up, followed by deep disappointment and regret, to see the Bagh caves, famed for their frescoes and sculptures and acclaimed by many to be superior to those in Ajanta, in utter decay. Today, the sixth century cave temples have been robbed of their glory by man's indifference and neglect and nature's unrelenting onslaught".

Rajasthan

There is a large group of 70 Buddhist caves at Dhamner, which is about 20 km West of Shamgarh railway station in Mandasor district and is 35 km North-West of Kolvi. The Dhamner caves seem to be the creation of the later Hinayana Buddhists. In these caves there is fine combination of the early Buddhist symbols of stupas with the reliefs of the Buddha images. For instance, in the Chaitya cave (No.13), there is a large rock-cut stupa in the centre. Behind the stupa is a sanctuary containing a colossal seated Buddha with a processional path around it. The doors are also decorated with Buddha figures.

At Kolvi, which is 13 km from the village of Dag is Jhalawar district, there are about 50 caves. Like Dhamner, the Chaitya shrines at Kolvi have images of the Buddha in various mudras but there are no images of the Bodhisattvas of the Mahayana Buddhists. The most impressive image is a 12 feet standing Buddha in a preaching posture in the main Chaitya hall.

There is another group of about 16 caves near the village of Binnayaga, 10 km North-East of Kolvi. These caves also have a number of interesting Buddha images. There is another group of 5 Buddhist caves at Hathiagor, near the village of Pagaria which is about 5 km from Kolvi. A series of Buddhist caves have also been found at Khejariabhop about 16 km East of Kolvi.

MUSEUMS

National Museum, New Delhi

The National Museum, situated at the crossing of

Rajpath and Janpath in New Delhi, was established after Independence in 1949. It has since grown into a premier museum preserving the remains of Indian culture and civilization of over five thousand years. A visitor to the National Museum is welcomed by a superb Yakshi, a female chauri-bearer, in polished sandstone of the Mauryan period, from Didargang, Bihar. She stands in the middle of the entrance hall surrounded by other remarkable pieces of sculpture.

The Archaeological Gallery in the National Museum has four remarkable pieces of sculpture of second century BC which once adorned the famous Bharhut stupa in Madhya Pradesh. The first Bharhut exhibit is a Pillar showing Savanna Karkata Jataka; the second is also a Pillar showing Chhadanta Jataka on one side and Mahakapi Jataka on the other side. The third Bharhut sculpture is a stupa slab; and the fourth is Carving of a cave.

Next to Bharhut are three beautiful marble sculptures from Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh dating to the first-second century AD. These are: a Stupa Casing slab showing scenes from Buddha's life; Asita's Visit to Suddhodana - the sculpture shows Asita holding the infant Buddha represented by a piece of cloth with footmarks in the palace of Suddhodana; and Buddha in a preaching attitude (symbolic). The Amaravati sculptures are on permanent loan from the British Museum, London. The remarkable limestone sculptures from Nagarjunakonda, Andhra Pradesh, dating to the second-third century AD are: a frieze showing Transportation of Buddha's Turban; another frieze depicting scenes from Buddha's life and from the Jatakas. The scenes here include Siddhartha immersed in pleasure, Duta-Jataka movie, Sumana brings water from Anotatta lake-- Preaching Buddha, the story of the wise lady, Bhuridata Jataka, and the fall of Mandhata; a Stupa slab showing triratnas, three purana kumbhas and lions in row; and yet another Stupa slab showing triratnas, purna kumbhas- Vase of Plenty, stupas, triratnas and lions in a row.

The Kushana sculptures in stone of second century AD from Mathura are: 1. Architrave showing Buddha in dhyana and abhayamudra, and adoration of the Buddha's turban; Another architrave depicting procession of devotees in typical vehicles of the period drawn by bullocks and camels and animals of fancy, like lions with fish tail, and crocodiles with swan's neck, auspicious

objects and adoration of the Buddha and Buddha's bowl. The Museum also has a very good collection of Gandhara sculptures and stuccos of second-third century AD. Notable Gandhara schist sculptures include images of the Buddha, Bodhisattvas, Bodhisattva Maitreya, Maya's dream, and Scenes from Buddha's life. The note-worthy Gandhara stuccos include a Bust of Buddha, Heads of Buddha, a meditating Buddha, and a standing Buddha.

The Gupta art collection in the Museum is represented by a number of beautiful stone images in sitting and standing poses of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas from Sarnath - all dating to the fifth-sixth century AD. Buddha's life in Epitome is also depicted in a fifth century sculpture from Sarnath. The scenes include-- Bottom panel: 1. Maya's dream (the descent of a white elephant into the womb of Maya and the Birth of Buddha); 2. The infant Buddha being bathed by Naga Kings, Nanda and Upananda. Middle panel: The Great Departure; Chandaka receiving the royal robes and ornaments from the Master; The Bodhisattva cutting of his hair; Sujata's offering; Bodhisattva in conversation with Naga Kalika; and Bodhisattva's Meditation. Upper panel; Mara's Attack; Bodhisattva's Enlightenment; and Buddha's First Sermon. The topmost portion which probably represented Buddha's Maha-parinirvana has broken off. Finally, the National Museum also has a large collection of images of the Buddha, Bodhisattvas and Buddhist pantheon of the Pala period, ninth-twelfth century AD in stone as well as in bronze.

Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay

The Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay established in 1909, has a varied collection of Gandhara sculptures consisting of bas-reliefs depicting the Jataka stories, episodes from the life of Buddha, and some decorative designs. Two remarkable Gandhara sculptures are: 1. Buddha preaching with his disciples, Grey schist, 30 x 19.5 cms. second-third century AD, and 2. Vajrapani and other attendants, Grey schist. 30 x 27 cms. second-third century AD. The Museum also has a beautiful image of the meditating Buddha from Mirpurkhas, Sind. The figure is Polychrome terracotta, 63.5 x 47.2 cms, of fifth century AD. Another attractive terracotta figure, also from Mirpurkhas, fifth century AD, is that of donor

or a young devotee. One of the most interesting exhibits in the Museum is an ivory carving of the Gupta period. The carving represents the opening scene from the Saddharma Pundarika in which the meditation of Buddha on the Mt. Gridhrakuta, Rajgir is being witnessed with amazement by the divine and semi-divine beings, and the figure of Avalokitesvara attended by devotees. Dr. Moti Chandra calls this piece "as the highest landmark in the art of ivory-carving in India".

As Maharashtra has preserved Buddhist heritage mostly in situ by way of Cave Temples, there is nothing much in the Museum from within the State. A solitary important item in the museum is the Asokan Rock Edict discovered at Sopara. This piece covers only a part of the Rock Edicts VIII and IX which are on the subject of 'Commencement of the Dhamma-tours' and 'Futility of conventional auspicious ceremonies, and the superior status of Dhamma-preachers'.

Indian Museum, Calcutta

The Indian Museum, 27 Jawaharlal Nehru Road, Calcutta is the oldest Museum in the country having been founded in 1814. It was moved to the present building in 1878. In the spacious Entrance Hall of the Indian Museum are exhibited some magnificent pieces of early Indian sculpture. These include three Asokan pillar capitals. Two of them, the Lion Capital from Sarnath (U.P.) and the Bull Capital from Rampurva (Bihar) are in plaster cast. The third one, the Lion Capital from Rampurva is in the original. This capital is of the inscribed Asokan pillar at Rampurva. The crowning emblem of the capital is a heraldic lion seated on its haunches, and its abacus is decorated with a row of geese. Carved out of a single block of buff coloured Chunar sandstone, this capital (2.26 m high) preserves in places its lustrous 'Mauryan' polish.

One of the earliest Buddhist monuments to be built in Central India was at Bharhut. When Buddhism declined in India, the Bharhut Stupa fell into disuse and was later on pulled down by the people merely for the sake of bricks required for their houses. According to Cunningham, to whom we owe the discovery and salvage in 1873-74 of whatever little had escaped the destruction and spoiltation of the rich heritage of Bharhut, the stone railing

round the Stupa was 86 feet in diameter and about 275 feet in length. The rail was 9 feet high and had four gateways 22 feet six inches in height.

Majority of the Bharhut sculptures are now in the Indian Museum. The Bharhut Gallery is to the South of the Entrance Hall. Here are exhibited the massive Eastern Gateway (torana) and part of the Railing (vedika) of the Bharhut stupa. The Gateway and portions of the Railing, consisting of pillars, architraves, cross-bars and coping, have been re-erected in this Gallery to give the visitor an idea of the Railing as it stood, dominated by the Torana, at Bharhut. The Railing and Gateway are profusely ornamented with sculpture in bas-relief illustrating the Jatakas and events from the life of the Buddha as well as subjects of popular interest and mythology, and a large number of patterns and designs, floral, animal and geometric. Thus the subjects covered by the pioneer Buddhist artists of second century BC are varied and vast in number. The illustrations[12] include 24 Jatakas, 7 historical scenes, 27 miscellaneous scenes, 6 humorous scenes and a host of objects of worship.

In the Bharhut sculptures, the Buddha is represented by symbols only and not in human form. Such symbols are: Dharma-Chakra, Bodhi Tree and Footprints (Buddha-padas). The Bharhut sculptures for the first time confirm the tradition of seven Buddhas. The Bodhi Trees belonging to six Buddhas, with the names attached to them, have been found at Bharhut. The six Buddhas and their Bodhi Trees depicted therein are: 1. Vipasyi - Patali, 2. Visvabhu - Sala, 3. Krakuchhanda - Sirisa, 4. Kankamuni - Udumbara, 5. Kasyapa - Nygrodha, 6. Sakyamuni Buddha - Pippal (Asvattha).

The missing Bodhi Tree (Pundarika or White Lotus) of Sikhi, the second Buddha, must have been there on the last part of the Railing.

The most important historical events associated with the life of Gautama the Buddha sculptures at Bharhut are:-

1. Dream of Maha Maya; 2. Buddha's visit to the Tushita Heaven; 3. The gift of Jatavana Monastery; 4. Visit of Prasenajit; and 5. Visit of Ajatasatru. Here is a brief description of these events as visualised by the sculpturists of Bharhut:

1. Dream of Maha Maya: It is said that a white elephant

approached the mother of the Buddha in sleep and appeared to enter into her womb by her right side. In the Bharhut sculpture, the elephant has in the main two tusks, but they are marked to represent three tusks each. Thus it confirms the belief of an elephant with six tusks.

2. *The gift of Jetavana Monastery:* The purchase and gift of Jetavana by Anathapindika at a fabulous cost, a layer of Kotis, and construction of a monastery thereon for the Buddha is a well-known event recorded in the Pali scriptures. Significantly enough, the inscription below the sculpture at Bharhut says: 'Jetavana Anathapediko deti Koti-samthatena Keta', i.e. 'Anathapindika dedicates Jetavana, purchased with a layer of crores'. In the scene itself, there is a bullock cart, with the bullocks unyoked sitting beside it, and with the yoke tilted up in the air to show that the cart has been unloaded. In front are Anathapindika and his treasurer counting out the gold pieces brought in the cart. Above them are two other men seated and busily engaged in covering the surface of the garden with the gold coins. To the left are six other figures, most probably Prince Jeta and his friends, and in the very middle of the picture there is Anathapindika again carrying a vessel in both hands in the act of pouring water over Buddha's hands symbolically represented here through a Bodhi Tree as a token of presentation. The illustration has also two monasteries labelled as Gandha-kuti and Kosamba-kuti.

3. *Visit of Prasenajit to Buddha:* One of the Bharhut sculptures depicts very beautifully a visit of King Prasenajit to the Punya sala. Here the King is shown coming out of the city gate in a royal procession in a chariot drawn by four horses. Behind the chariot is the palace gateway, through which some people are passing. The Purya Sala or "Hall of Religious Merit" is also shown in the illustration. The building, probably an exact replica of the Punya Sala, is a two-storey edifice. In the middle of the open-pillard lower room there is placed the Buddhist Wheel of the Law. It is labelled as 'Bhagavata dhamma Chakam', that is 'Buddha's Dharma Chakra', and represents the Buddha. The king is paying homage to Dharmachakra with both hands joined in an attitude of devotion.

4. *Visit of Ajatasatru to Buddha:* "Ajatasatru Bhagavato Vadate", so says the inscription below the scene in which Ajatasatru is shown worshipping the Buddha. The sculpture shows Ajatasatru's procession to the garden; his dismounting from the elephant near the dwelling place of the Buddha; and lastly worshipping the footprints which symbolize Buddha.

5. *Sankisa Ladder:* The legend about the Buddha's visit to the Tushita heaven in order to preach Dhamma to His mother, and His descent to earth after three months at Sankisa (Sankasya) is the subject of another relief found at Bharhut. The sculpture shows the triple ladder in the centre with a Bodhi Tree and a Vajrasana at its foot. There is one footprint (of the Buddha) on the top step and a second footprint on the bottom step of the middle ladder. Around the ladder on all sides are a number of spectators awaiting anxiously the return of the Buddha.

Two other interesting sculptures in the Bharhut gallery are:

1. *The Worship of the Locks of Hair in the Assembly Hall of the Gods:* The panel shows the Vaijayanta palace of Indra on the right side and the Assembly Hall of the gods with the Bodhisattva's hair on the left. The four nymphs dancing to the accomopaniment of music evidently suggest that the festival of the lock of the hair of the Buddha is being celebrated.

2. *The Visit of Naga Elapatra:* The inscription on the panel says, "Erapato Nagaraja Bhagavato Vadate", the Naga King Elapatra worships the Lord. Elapatra appears twice in the sculpture, first coming out of the water as a serpent and then worshipping Buddha in the shape of a human being with the hood of a snake.

Beyond the Bharhut railing is another reconstructed railing composed partly of original pieces and partly of plaster cast replicas of certain parts of the stone railing which still stands in situ around the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya. Among the sculptures depicted on this railing are: a Yaksha-like figure standing on a lion and holding a bunch of grass in his raised right hand; a Yakshi climbing a tree with the help of a male figure seated below; and the figure of the Sun-god (Surya) riding on a chariot drawn by four horses with his female companions Usha and Pratyusa on either

side shooting arrows. This is one of earliest representations of the god Surya in Indian art.

The Gandhara Gallery has a considerable collection of sculptures belonging to the Gandhara School which flourished in north-west India between the first and fourth centuries AD. Some of the notable schist sculptures in this Gallery are:

1. *The Birth of Buddha and the Seven Steps:* Here the Bodhisattva emerges from the right side of his mother as she stands holding the branch of a sala tree. Sakra receives him on a golden cloth. Behind Sakra is the god Brahma. The child is seen in the foreground taking seven steps.

2. *The Bath and the Return from Lumbini:* The right side of the sculpture shows the Bodhisattva being bathed by Indra and Brahma. The return of Maya from Lumbini in a bullock cart with the child is shown in the middle. The extreme left shows the city musicians welcoming the mother and child to Kapilavastu.

3. *The Great Renunciation:* As the Bodhisattva proceeds on his journey, an umbrella is held over him and two Yakshas lift the hooves of the horse. The city goddess of Kapilavastu is also present in the scene. Mara the Evil One, is also shown on one side.

4. *The Bodhisattva approaching the Bodhi Tree:* The Bodhisattva is shown here touching with his hand the seat under the Bodhi Tree. The earth goddess is shown below the seat.

5. *The gods exhorting Buddha to preach the Dhamma:* Lord Buddha seated in Abhayamudra is seen surrounded by the gods who beseach him with folded hands to preach.

6. *The Reception at Sarnath:* The panel shows Buddha and the five Bhikkhus, one of whom is inviting him to take the seat. A number of gods and some wealthy persons are also shown.

7. *The Invitation of Srigupta:* Srigupta, a wealthy householder of Rajagrha was a follower of the heretical Purana. He invited Buddha to a meal in his house with the intention of killing him. He therefore deposited burning charcoal in a pit under a light cover on the way and also poisoned the food. Buddha saw through the conspiracy and turned the ditch into a tank and

lotuses and also purified the food through his miraculous powers. Surprised at this, Srigupta repented and took refuge in Buddha. The sculpture shows Buddha standing in the centre with some monks behind him. Srigupta is shown twice in the panel, once offering food to the Buddha, and then kneeling, evidently confessing his guilt. Buddha and his disciples are standing on lotuses.

The Long Gallery on the east has sculptures from different Indian schools from the beginning of the Christian era to about the end of the twelfth century AD. Noteworthy among the sculptures displayed here are the colossal headless Bodhisattva (Buddha) from Sravasti dedicated by Bhikshu Bala during the reign of Kanishka (c. first-second century AD); and three figures of Yakshinis carved on railing pillars from Buteswar, Mathura (c. second century AD). "A huge seated Bodhisattva (Buddha) from Bodh Gaya, dated 383-84, marks the transition from Mathura to Gupta art; and a large standing Buddha from Mathura of about the fifth century AD is a fine example of the western version of the Gupta sculptural style".[13]

Some of the other interesting sculptures in this Gallery are:

1. The Visit of Indra, Stone, Mathura, second century AD. The Buddha is seated inside Indrasala Cave on Vediyika Hill near Rajagriha, and Indra is approaching him with hands joined in adoration. Behind Indra are his attendants and mount, Airavata. On the right, Indra's arrival is being announced by his musician.

2. A number of sculptures from Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh), of which a coping slab (c. second century AD) shows in three panels-- the Bodhisattva (the future Buddha) in Tushita heaven, his descent in the form of a white elephant, and the dream of Queen Mahamaya.

3. Buddha's life in Epitome, Stone, Sarnath, fifth century AD- The scenes from Buddha's life represented here are: The Birth of the Buddha, the First Bath (Naga Kings are seen pouring water), Mara's Attack, and Buddha's Enlightenment, the First Sermon and the Mahaparinirvana. The Buddha figures at the sides shown in different mudras, seated and standing on lotuses represent the Great Miracle of Sravasti.

4. The Birth of the Buddha and the Seven Steps, Nalanda, eleventh century AD - The panel shows the birth of Buddha being attended not only by Indra and Brahma but also by Vishnu. The seven steps are indicated by the lotuses on which the Bodhisattva stands.

To the east of the Long Gallery is the Bronze Room. A large number of images here from Nalanda, and Jhewari, Chittagong district, Bangladesh (c. ninth-twelfth centuries AD) are mainly Buddhist in iconographic affiliation, and in them the images of the Buddha and such Buddhist deities as the Bodhisattva Avalokitosvara, Tara, and Vasudhara predominate.

In the Western Corridor is exhibited the huge stone chest measuring 132 x 81 x 66.5 cms, excavated in 1898 from the stupa (c. fourth century BC) at Piprahwa in Basti district, UP. In this chest were found four steatite caskets containing the relics of the Buddha, which are displayed in the Terracotta and Minor Arts Gallery. One of them bears an inscription in Mauryan Brahmi characters which says that it was "the receptacle of the relics of the body of Lord Buddha".

Government Museum, Madras

A remarkable Buddha image from the Tanjor district greets the visitor at the entrance of Government Museum, Egmore, Madras. This Museum was established in 1851 and has the largest collection of sculptures from Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh. The Amaravati Stupa, when built in the third century BC, was a modest stupa enclosed by a granite railing. In the next two or three centuries, the granite rail was replaced by the limestone one and the gateways were also renovated. In the second century AD, the stupa was enlarged and also enclosed by a new highly ornamental railing, carved with beautiful reliefs and elegant designs.

In its final shape, the Ornamental railing was over 4 m high and measured about 54 m in diameter, pierced on all the four sides by gateways. According to Dr. Barnet, "The railing consisted of about 244 m of coping resting on 136 pillars and 348 cross-bars." A large number of sculptures were either burnt for lime or used as building materials when the stupa was dismantled

in 1797 by the Raja of Chintapalli for building a new township at Amaravati.

Majority of the surviving Amaravati sculptures are in the Government Museum, Madras. This collection is largely the one excavated by James Burgess in 1881 and some sculptures discovered by Alexander Rea who excavated the site thrice in 1888-89, 1905-6 and 1908-9. These sculptures in marble and limestone cover a period of over 450 years from about BC 200 to AD 250. "The art of the sculptures of Amaravati", says C. Sivaramamurti,[14] "is a noble expression of great genious. It is of various periods but at every stage it is above provincial barriers and cribbed outlook. Like all great art it is national rather than provincial".

There are as many as 72 sculptures depicting scenes from Buddha's Life, and 27 sculptures depicting Buddha's Previous Lives (Jatakas and Avadanas) in the Madras Museum, These are:[15]

First Period: c.a.200-100 BC

Four scenes of this period are:

1. The shooting Contest and other scenes;
2. The conversion of the Jatilas headed by Uruvela Kassapa;
3. The story of Angulimala: The panel shows a fierce man with a sword, a flaming pillar surmounted by a trisula. A man is also kneeling near a pair of feet at the base of the pillar. A lady with a vessel on her head stands to the left of the pillar; and
4. Division of the Relics of the Buddha after the Maha-parinirvana at Kusinara.

Second Period: c.a.100 AD

Twenty scenes from Buddha's life of this period are:

1. The Dream of Maya. 2. The Temptation. 3. The Buddha and Nagas 4.-6. The Bodhisattva's Departure, The Temptation and the attempted opening of the Ramagrama Stupa by Asoka. 7. The Ramagrama Stupa. 8. Symbolic representation of Principal Scenes of Buddha's life. 9-20. Symbolic representation of various

scenes - adoration of the Bodhi tree, Dharmachakra, throne and flaming pillar, etc. Of these, the first sculpture shows the dream of Maya of her bath in water from Anotatta lake. In the panel, five women with water jars are attending on a lady in the centre, standing at ease softly stroking her hair- she is taking a bath and arranging her toilet. The sculpture No. 3 shows nimbate Buddha seated on a low seat with his hands in Abhayamudra preaching to a Nagaraja and Nagini on either side of him. The Nagaraja to his left has joined his hands in adoration, a Nagini admires, and a deva flutters above with offerings. The sculpture No. 9 is a large slab showing Bodhi Tree and empty throne on either side of which stand a man and woman of rank, all the four carrying vessels full of water. Devas flutter above carrying offerings, one on each side. There is a border of running lions at the top of this panel. To the right is a border with rail pillar pattern. The sculpture No. 15 is also a large slab showing Dharmachakra on a pillar behind empty throne adored by two noble looking devotees on each side, one standing waving a fly whisk and another seated with hands joined in reverence. A deva hovers above on either side with offerings.

Third Period: c.a.150 AD

Thirty-one scenes of this period are: 1. Bodhisattva's Descent as a White Elephant. 2. Dream of Maya and its interpretation. 3. Suddhodana visits Maya in the Asoka Grove. 4. The Great Departure. 5. The Translation of the Bowl. 7. The Temptation. 8. The Great Enlightenment. 9. The First Sermon 10. The Coversion of Yasa and his friends. 11. The Conversion of the Bhaddhavaggiya Youths. 12. The Birth of Rahula and other scenes from Buddha's Life. 13. The Conversion of Nanda. 14. Sumana the Gardener, Sumanamalakara. 15. Buddha subdues the fierce Elephant Nalagiri. 16. Ajatasatru visits Buddha. 17. A monkey offers honey to Buddha; Ajatasatru visits Buddha. 18. The story of Angulimala 19. The story of Angulimala repeated with slight variation. 20. Buddha performs a Miracle at Sravasti 21. The Sravasti Miracle repeated with slight variation 22. Buddha preaches to His Mother in Heaven. 23. King Pasendi (Prasenajit) entertains Ananda and other Monks. 24. Cullakara's wives regain their husband. 25. Rupananda learns of the Impermanence of Beauty. 26-27. The story of King Udayana and his Queens. 28. The Division of the Relics. 29. Symbolic Representation of Principal Scenes from Buddha'a Life. 30. Stupa Adoration symbolising Buddha's Parinirvana. 31. Adoration of Buddha under the Bodhi Tree symbolising Enlightenment. The Sculpture (No.2) depicts Dream of Maya and its Interpretation. It shows a king seated on a throne with his queen on a seat beside him attended by women with chauries in their hands. He is questioning others seated to his left. To the left is a royal lady on a couch guarded by four attendents men and women. The sculpture No. 6 is a cross-bar showing the worship of Buddha's Alms Bowl. The scene is in the Tushita Heaven. A number of gods and goddesses are shown clustering round a bowl in a tray carried aloft and adored with great reverence. Nagas, garudas and other demigods dance while dwarf yakshas make soft music with conch and drum and divine damsels soar above with hands joined in adoration. The sculpture No. 11 shows the conversion of the Bhaddhavaggiya youths by the Buddha. It is a cross-bar with empty throne and feet on footrest under Bodhi Tree adored by thirty noble-looking turbaned youths, some standing waving chauries, others approaching or moving away with hands joined in adoration, yet others seated in the same attitude and some more reverently kneeling. The sculpture No.15 shows Buddha subduing the fierce elephant Nalagiri. The scene depicts the havoc caused by the mad elephant, Nalagari, let loose by Devadatta. The animal is shown rushing furiously along towards the Buddha and his monks in the streets of Rajagrha. The people are painstricken at the sight of the mad elephant. Those that have entered their houses watch from their balconies with reverence and pity. Then at the right end the elephant is shown kneeling before the Buddha. The Buddha has been shown here in the form of a flaming pillar above a pair of feet on a lotus. The sculpture No.28 is a coping stone carved on both sides. The inner side shows seven elephants with two riders each, one holding a casket, and another waving a chauri, issuing from a city gateway within which in three panels two scenes

of important discussion and consultation among chiefs, and one of muscial and dance festivities are shown. The sculpture No. 30 depicts Buddha's Parinirvana. This is a cross-bar with medallion representing the worship of the stupa. A man and woman are kneeling in the foreground before the stupa. To the right are five men, two playing drums and others the flute, and to the left are six women and two boys reverently approaching, one of them carrying a tray with offerings.

The Jatakas depicted in the Amaravati sculptures of this period are: 1. The Snakecharmer and his monkey, Ahigundika Jataka. 2. The story of Bhuridatta, Bhuridatta Jataka. 3. The Noble Six-tusked Elephant, Chaddanta Jataka. 4. The Love-smitten King, Culabodhi Jataka. 5. & 6. The Wicked King who chopped his son into bits, Culladhamapala Jataka. 7. The Story of Messenger, Duta Jataka. 8. Mara obstructs Pacceka Buddha's Feeding, Khadirangara Jataka. 9. The Elephant Mahilamukha is taught Virtue, Mahilamukha Jataka. 10. The story of Mittavindaka the Unfortunate One, Losaka Jataka. 11. The Story of Matanga, Matanga Jataka. 12. The Story of the Virtuous Prince, Mahapadama Jataka. 13. The Peacock preaches the Dhamma, Mor Jataka 14. The Story of Prince Somanassa, Somanassa Jataka. 15. & 16. Virtue rewarded, Suruci Jataka. 17. The Presents of King Bandhuma; introduction to Vessantara Jataka. 18.-20. Vidhura the Wise One, Vidhurapandita Jataka.

Other scenes from Buddha's Previous Lives are: 1. Ghoshaka the Fortunate, Ghoshakasetthi Uppatti. 2. The Story of Kavikumara, Kavikumaravadana, 3. Mandhata, the Universal Monarch. 4. Saka gains a Celestial Nymph, Rohin khattiyakanna. 5. The Story of Sarvamdad, Sarvamdadavadana.

Fourth Period: c.a.200-250 AD

Seventeen scenes of Buddha's life of this period are: 1. Maya's Dream and its Interpretation. 2. The Miracle under the Jambu tree at Kapilavastu. 3. The Renunciation. 4. Scenes ending with Mara's claim of Bodhisattva's seat. 5. Sujata feeds the Bodhisattva-- the slab slightly broken shows Buddha (Headless) seated on a throne and some women attending on him with

great devotion while some are requesting him to partake of food brought by them. 6. The Temptation. 7-8. The Conversion of Nanda. 9. Rahula asks for his inheritence-- the sculpture shows Rahula being brought near Buddha and urged to ask for his inheritence, Buddha who is shown here with a halo, is leaving the palace. Rahula's mother and her companions are respectively standing aside, watching the boy as he approaches his father. 10. Principal Scenes from Buddha's Life. 11-16. Some more scenes from Buddha's Life. 17. The Stupa of Ramagrama.

There are only two scenes from Buddha's Previous Lives. These are: Vessantara, the Generous Prince, Vessantara Jataka; and The Stories of Sarvamdada and Vidhurapandita.

Besides the Amaravati sculptures, there are also a number of interesting Buddhist sculptures from Goli, Jaggayyapeta, Ghantasala and Bhattiprolu in Andhra in this Museum. From within Tamil Nadu, the Buddha images from Kanchipuram, and Buddha images (in bronze) from Nagapattinam in district Tanjore are notable.

Amaravati Museum, Amaravati

The Amaravati Stupa on the bank of river Krishna in district Guntur in Andhra Pradesh, though initially built in the third century BC, was enlarged in AD second century and also enclosed by a 14 feet high ornamental rail, carved with beautiful reliefs and elegant designs. The Stupa in its final shape had "the vestiges of characteristic ayaka-platforms projecting out of the drum at cardinal directions. These platforms carried originally five ayaka-pillars representing symbolically the five important events of Buddha's life: 'Birth, Renunciation, Enlightenment, First Sermon and Maha-parinirvana'. Both drum and ayaka-platforms were covered with sculptured slabs. The dome, estimated to have a diameter of 42 m rested over the rim of the drum leaving all round a better of about 7.1 m; its height being about half of its diameter. Tall dome-slabs measuring about 2.32 m and carved with tri-ratna and purna-Kumbha, covered the lower part of the dome, above which probably came the decorations in stucco".

The Amaravati Maha-Chaitya, as it is called, survived almost intact, with its towering dome, till about the fourteenth century. After this, however, it was completely neglected and lost sight of. The existence of the Amaravati Stupa came to light in 1797 when Collin Mackenzie visited Amaravati and found some men quarrying the remains of the stupa for materials for a new township being built by the Raja of Chintapalli who had shifted his residence a year earlier from Chintapalli to Amaravati. As Mackenzie had no idea about the structure, he did not interfere. Consequently, many priceless sculptures were used in the Amaresvara temple, the Sivganga tank and other buildings then being constructed while some were burnt for lime. Such vandalism continued for over 20 years till Mackenzie revisited the site in 1818, with a band of assistants and prepared drawings of the site and the stupa.

Nothing remains now of the grandest Amaravati stupa except a small mound which consists of just the drum of the brick-built stupa, the paved circumambulatory path and the circular alignment of the railing represented by a few uprights and pillars. At present, the stupa drum has a height of about 1.55 m and a diameter of 49.30 m. However, a model of the Maha-Chaitya, in its most evolved stage, the conjectural restoration of a part of the railing and a few sculptured panels, all in cement, may be seen in the courtyard of the nearby Museum.

The exhibits in the Amaravati Museum include those left at the site by Burgess (1881) and A. Rea (1888-89) and those recovered by K. Subramanyam and K. Krishna Murthy of the Archaeological Survey of India during the last excavations in 1958-59. Chronologically, the site Museum collection,[16] mostly in stone, covers a period of 1500 years-- from BC third century to AD twelfth century.

The main exhibit in the Key-Gallery is "The lotus medallion, carved on a cross-bar of a railing, datable to the second century AD. It is flanked on either side by a dome slab depicting the Purna-Kumbha or 'ambrosial vase with overflowing foliage and flowers'. Purna-Kumbha is an auspicious symbol expressing an idea of fulness and abundance".

The Western wing of the gallery is formed by two drum-slabs, each of them showing the bas-relief of a stupa. The stupa is shown encircled by a four-barred rail-cross-bars and fluted uprights showing lotus-medallions. On either side of the gateway is a seated lion atop an octagonal pillar. The ornate entrance to the pradakshina-patha is marked by a moon-stone carved with a lotus-design having purna-kumbha on either side. The stupa proper shows three out of the four ayaka-platforms, the front one surmounted by five pillars symbolizing five main events of Buddha's life. However, the principal object of worship is a chakra on a throne, flanked by chauri (flywhisk)-- bearers and devotees.

On the dome of the same stupa-- relief are sculptured at least three Jataka stories. These are the Sibi-Jataka, The Mandhata-- Jataka and the Vessantara-- Jataka.

The other drum-slab depicts a simple stupa, with three-barred rail and ayaka-pillars. Buddha is here symbolized variously as a flaming pillar (agniskandha), and wheel surmounting a pillar, each one placed on a throne. There are also two representations of Buddha-pada with umbrella on top.

A life-size standing image of Buddha greets the visitor as soon as he steps into gallery I. With left shoulder and forearm draped in Sanghati, his right hand, now missing, was probably in the abhaya, whereas his left hand holds the hem of the robe near his chest. A circular mark on the forehead, a mark of Maha-purusha-lakshana (sign of great man) is quite conspicuous. The top-knot and ring-like curls of the short hair, turned to the right are suggestive of superhuman wisdom. The image stands gracefully to a height of about 2 m (excluding the pedestal).

The drum slab near the southern wing depicts, in the foreground, the scene of the worship of wheel. On the dome of the stupa-relief are miniature compositions delineating scenes from the life of Gautama Buddha. These reliefs include the scenes of the descent of Bodhisattva in the form of a white elephant, Queen Mayadevi's dream of the elephant entering her womb, the interpretation of the dream, the birth of Siddhartha and the presentation of the baby before nagara-devatas. In a running frieze below, occurs the story of the Mandhata-jataka in four panels.

Another impressive piece in this gallery is an ornate

cross-bar. Both its faces are carved: on the obverse is carved the lotus-medallion while the reverse shows the scene of the presentation of Rahula to Buddha. In the scene carved within an outline of lotus-petals, Buddha has been represented symbolically by a throne, his padukas below the throne and a flaming pillar surmounted by the triratna. A crowd of monks, is seen to the left of the throne, while on the right is a group of women from royal household. A princely figure is seen presenting Rahula to Buddha. Behind him, in half-turned attitude, stands gracefully Yasodhara pointing her hand at her son urging him to ask for his inheritance.

Occupying the pride of place in gallery-II is a limestone stele with labelled bas-reliefs of the second century BC.

The reliefs on the southern face contain six scenes pertaining to the last three months of the life of Buddha-- from his stay at Vaisali to the Parinirvana at Kusinagara. On the left corner occurs the representation of the Bahuputa-chaitya, a favourite resort of Gautama Buddha. In these scenes Chaitya has been represented as a tree-within-railing. The most prominent of the three trees is worshipped by two devotees, one of them with folded hands and the other holding a child in the out stretched left hand. It has an inscribed label giving the name Bahuputa-chatiya. To the right of the first scene is a kneeling figure with folded hands before a Buddha-pada. The label calls it Chapala-chaitya, another favourite resort of Buddha at Vaisali. Over the second scene is a vaulted structure with three pinacles, and outside a Buddha-pada under an umbrella. The inscription on the vault says 'The Lord dwells in the Kutagara cottage in Mahavana at Vaisali." It is said that Buddha went from Chapala-Chaitya to Mahavana-- Kutagara and from there, while bidding farewell to Vaisali, gazed at the city 'with an elephant's look', the actual inscription also states nagapalogana. The next scene is represented by a river with a handled bowl; beside it is an ablong seat below a tree. As the story goes, Buddha fell sick on his way to Kusinagara. He sat under a tree and wanted to drink water from the adjoining streamlet. As the water was muddy, Ananda, his disciple, was hesitant but on Buddha's insistence he went to fetch water. To his surprise

Ananda saw that the streamlet had begun to flow clear. The river shown in the relief stands for this streamlet where miracle of clear water took place. A fragment of the last scene, the Pariniravana at Kusinagara, is only preserved but the label says 'the extinction of the Lord in the sala-grove'.

The second face gives a few scenes from Sravasti including the familiar scene of the purchase of Jetavana Park by Anathapindika from prince Jeta, all with appropriate labels.

Nagarjunakonda Museum, Nagarjunakonda

Nagarjunakonda, in district Guntur of Andhra Pradesh, became a flourishing Buddhist centre in the third century AD due to the patronage of the Ikshvaku Kings and Queens. With the downfall of the Ikshvakus in the early years of the fourth century, Nagarjunakonda relapsed into darkness, and remained unknown for centuries. The existence of the Nagarjunakonda monuments came to light in March 1926. Some excavations were carried out in the subsequent years which brought to light a number of Buddhist monasteries. Nagarjunakonda assumed importance in the 1950's when the Nagarjunsagar dam was conceived as a result of which the valley was to be transformed into a reservoir. In order to salvage, whatever possible, of the priceless art treasure, a special team was appointed in 1954. Accordingly, R. Subramanyam, a Superintendent of the Archaeological Survey of India, excavated the entire valley within a short span of six years exposing about 120 sites.

All the sites now stand submerged by the gigantic multipurpose Nagarjunasagar Dam. Yet the glory of Nagarjunakonda shines in the midst of the third largest man-made lake in the world. Hundreds of beautiful sculptures and some of the monuments which would have been submerged by the construction of the dam have been lifted to the top of a hill, which stands right in the midst of the reservoir. The island museum, which is unique and first of its kind in the world, can be reached by a launch from Anuppu, the jetty point about 8 km from Vijayapuri, a little town which has sprung up around the dam. From Anupu, Nagarjunakonda is about 14 km. The Nagarjunasagar Dam is

150 km by road from Hyderabad, the capital of Andhra Pradesh.

The most attractive piece in the Key-Gallery of the Museum[17] is the colossal statue of Lord Buddha standing to a height of about 3 m. Originally found in several fragments at Site 4, the image, like any other sculpture from Nagarjunakonda, stands in frontal pose holding the hem of his garment in the left hand, while the right hand (broken) is granting protection.

On the eastern wing of the key-gallery is the panel depicting the main episodes of Buddha's life. In its elegant style of execution as well as in the portrayal of human moods the relief ranks as one of the best specimens of Nagarjunakonda art.

A bust of Buddha notable for its sharp features, is the first exhibit to be seen on the other side of the gallery, which has a number of architectural pieces like the cornice-beam, coping-stone and ayaka-pata. The gods carrying away in procession the relinquished crown of Gautama Buddha at the time of his great renunciation is the theme depicted within a medallion on an ayaka-pata. In the next exhibit are carved the scenes of conversion of Nanda, cousin of Buddha. It is one of the finest pieces of Nagarjunakonda showing from right to left the scenes of the meeting of Nanda and his wife Sunderi with Buddha, to ensure ceremony for Nanda's ordination, Buddha, flying to heaven with Nanda and the final conversion.

The next exhibit is a drum-slab carved with a developed form of a stupa. It is followed by a cornice-beam depicting, the five important life-events of Gautama Buddha, viz. Birth, Great Renunciation, Mara's attack, First Sermon at Sarnath and Mahaparinirvana. On the next slab is to be seen the serpent king Muchalinda, a favourite motif of the Nagarjunakonda artists.

The sculptures in the northern wing of the Main Gallery depict the Jataka tales carved variously on drum-slabs, dome-slabs and cornice beams. The sculptures preserved here relate to eight Jatakas, namely, Sasa Jataka, Champeyya Jataka, Sibi Jataka, Mandhata Jataka, Mahapadma Jataka, Vessantara Jataka, Dasartha Jataka, and Mahamasa Jataka.

Several dome slabs in the southern and western wings depict the important life scenes of the Buddha. In the upper compartment of a dome-slab is shown

the scene in which Sumedha, who resides in the Tushita heaven as Bodhisattva, resolving to take his final birth on earth. The lower compartment depicts his descent in a heavenly chariot as a white elephant, accompanied by celestial musicians, to enter the body of Maya. There are several scenes, carved on a cornice-beam, which present vividly the subsequent events. Birth in the Lumbini garden; Asita examines the child, who is represented by a pair of feet on the cloth, and predicts that he would be a Buddha when grown up; Siddhartha witnesses four visions that led to his renunciation-- in the scene Indra spreads parasol on him, four guardians of the directions hold hoofs of the horse on palms so that there is no noise; musicians and bearers carrying flag-staff and fly-whisk accompany him. Then on the banks of the river Anoma, he changes his garments for a monk's dress. And Gods carry away the relinquished crown of the Buddha.

Siddhartha practises penances for six years, at the end of which, at Uruvela (Bodh-Gaya), he accepts milk and rice from Sujata, and sits under the Bodhi-tree determined not to give up seat until he has gained full insight. Mara, the Evil One, attacks him but has to retreat. Eventually he attains enlightenment and becomes Buddha. Then the Buddha proceeds to Sarnath where he propounds his doctrine. In course of time, Buddha visits Kapilavastu and approaches the apartments of Yasodhara who stands waiting at the door. Rahula enquires of him about inheritance. Buddha goes to the heaven to preach to his mother Maya. Also, he converts the robber Angulimala, the king Ajatasatru, the naga of Uruvela, and the Yaksha Alavaka.

A few monuments have been faithfully reconstituted out of ancient materials on the Nagarjunakonda Island. These are: Maha-stupa and apsidal shrine, Site I; monastery, Site 4; apsidal shrine, Site 43; and stupa with swastika inset, Site 59.

Nalanda Museum, Nalanda

The world famous Buddist University at Nalanda, a complex of imposing buildings, flourished for over 700 years till it was ruthlessly sacked by the invading Muslim army in the closing years of the 12th century AD. It lay in ruins for another 700 years till the ruins

were indentified by Alexander Cunningham in 1871, and excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India in 1915. The remains unearthed by them bear witness to the grandeur and glory of the Nalanda Maha Vihara.

The ruins of Nalanda extend over a vast area. Lengthwise they extend from South to North, the monasteries on the Eastern flank and the temples on the Western. The monasteries were all built in more or less the same plan in each case, with rows of cells preceded by a corridor round a central courtyard and shrine at the back wall, just opposite the entrance. The stupa site No. 3 is a huge structure standing in the middle of a court on the south-western flank surrounded by a number of stupas. To the North of this stupa and in the same alignment are ruins of the temples erected directly over the ruins of earlier ones.

The antiquities discovered from the vast ruins at Nalanda are preserved in the site Museum which was opened in 1917. Among other things, it is interesting to note the bronze and stone Buddha images, some with umbrella overhead, images of the Mahayana and Hindu deities as well as terracotta figurines and plaques and clay seals. The Nalanda collection is of great importance for the history of Indian art and iconography of the later Gupta and Pala periods. The terracotta seals of 9th century AD of the Nalanda Mahavihara have on the top the dharmachakra symbol with a deer on each side. Below is the legend: "Sri Nalanda Maha-Vihariyarya-bhikshu-sanghasya', i.e. of the community of venerable monks of the Great Monastery of Nalanda.

The Nalanda Museum also has a few antiquities found during the excavations at Rajgir.

Sarnath Museum, Sarnath

Sarnath, being the scene of Buddha's First Sermon-Dharma-chakra-pravartana, a number of temples and monasteries had been built at this holy spot from time to time. Asoka the Great came on pilgrimage to Sarnath in about 250 BC and raised several monuments here. One of them was the Dharmarajika Stupa. Another monument was the Dhamek Stupa. Yet another important monument was the monolith pillar surmounted by a magnificent lion capital. A number of new temples and viharas were added in the following centuries.

Hiuen Tsang, who visited Sarnath in AD 638, says[18] about the Mulagandhakuti (the main shrine):

"Its precincts are divided into eight portions (sections) connected by a surrounding wall. In the great enclosure is a Vihara about 200 feet high, with golden cover. The foundations of the building are of stone, so also the stairs; but the towers and niches are of brick. The niches are arranged on the four sides in a hundred successive lines, and in each niche is a golden figure of Buddha. In the middle of the Vihara is a figure of Buddha made of teeushih (native copper). It is a life-size figure and is represented as turning the wheel of the Law (preaching)".

Sarnath continued to be a living shrine upto the 12th century AD. Thereafter, it remained deserted and neglected for about 600 years. Even the existence of such a holy place was not known. Then under tragic circumstances Sarnath came to the notice of the modern world. This happened in 1794 when the Dharmarajika Stupa, which was still standing intact, was dismantled by Jagat Singh, Diwan of Raja Chet Singh of Benares, just for the sake of building material required for a housing colony. The first British Officer to take interest in Sarnath was Col. C. Mackenzie. He carried out some exploration in 1815 and discovered some sculptures. In 1835-56, Alexander Cunningham, opened the Dhamek Stupa, the sole surviving symbol of the ancient glory of Sarnath and found inside it a stone slab inscribed with the Bhuddhist creed. He also explored the monastery and a temple to the north of Dharmarajika Stupa. All the findings of Mackenzie and Cunningham are preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.

In 1904-5, F.C. Oertel undertook major excavation work at Sarnath. He exposed the main shrine, found the Lion Capital and unearthed a large number of sculptures and inscriptions. These discoveries prompted the Archaeological Survey of India to establish the site Museum which was moved to the present building in 1910. It houses all the antiquities discovered at Sarnath from 1904 onwards. The antiquities range in date from the third century BC to the time of destruction of Sarnath shrines in the twelfth century AD and consist of images, stucco figures, bas reliefs, inscriptions, architectural pieces, etc.

On entering the Main Hall of the Museum[19], the visitor sees the famous Lion Capital of Asoka which has since been adopted as the National Emblem of the Republic of India. The four lion capital, undoubtedly the most magnificent sculpture of Mauryan art "measures 2.31 m in height and originally consisted of four parts from bottom upwards, viz. (i) bell-shaped vase covered with inverted lotus-leaves, (ii) a round abacus, (iii) four seated lions emerging from one block, and (iv) a crowning dharmachakra with thirty-two spokes, of which only four fragments were recovered. The four crowning lions are of vigorous workmanship and are sculptured with great naturalism. The eyelids have holes for pins to keep in position the gems that were fixed in the sockets of the eyes. There are four running animals on the abascus, namely, an elephant, a bull, a horse and a lion, each separated by a smaller wheel or dharmachakra. The lion-capital is one of the great masterpieces of plastic art of all times."

Another outstanding sculpture in the Museum is that of the colossal Bodhisattva of red sandstone dedicated by Monk Bala of Mathura in the third year of Kanishka's reign. The image is powerfully built and is expressive of the best traditions of Mathura school of sculpture in early Kushana art. The octagonal shaft now set up behind the statue once carried a beautifully carved umbrella exhibited on the northern side of the room. An inscription in Kushana Brahmi script records the details of the installation of the image.

Yet another fine sculpture which catches the eye of the visitor is the Preaching Buddha. The seated Buddha image in the attitude of preaching represents Buddha delivering the First Sermon at Sarnath. The halo is carved with a pair of celestial figures and conventionalised floral scroll-work. On the pedestal is carved the dharmachakra. This image is one of the best creations of Gupta art of 5th century AD.

Yet another interesting sculpture is a stele showing scenes from Buddha's life in four panels, namely, Birth, Enlightenment, First Sermon and Maha-parinirvana. Another stele illustrates the eight events of Buddha's life. The four principal ones are the same as in the other stele, and are carved in the four corners of the slab. The other scenes carved in two rows in between them illustrate the four miracles of the Buddha:

The presentation of honey by a monkey to Buddha, at Vaisali; Taming of the mad elephant Nalagari by Buddha at Rajagrha; Buddha's descent from the heaven of thirty-three gods at Sankasya; and the Great Miracle of Sravasti, when Buddha multiplied his form a thousandfold.

Some other significant exhibits are: a railing of three pillars of the first century BC decorated with various sacred symbols like bodhi-tree, dharmachakra, triratana, stupa etc; some interesting Buddha images in standing and seated postures of the Gupta period; and several images of the Vajrayana pantheon.

Other Museums

Besides the eight Museums covered in the preceding pages, there are at least seven more Archaeological Museums having the largest number of Buddhist sculptures. These are:

The Mathura Museum: The historic city of Mathura in UP was a stronghold of Buddhism for over 1000 years from the third century BC onward. Both Fahian and Hiuen Tsang who visited the city in the fifth and seventh century AD respectively speak of the flourishing condition of Buddhism in Mathura. In fact, Mathura stands immortalised in the history of Buddhism on account of the distinct school of art that originated there in the 1st century AD. The excavations at Mathura during the last 200 years have brought to light a large number of Buddhist sculptures, viharas and stupas.

The Mathura Museum, originally started in 1874, was taken over by the UP Government and moved into the present building in 1930. It has the richest collection of antiquities from third century BC to tenth century AD discovered during the excavations at various sites in Mathura. In particular, it is the richest museum preserving the Buddhist art of Kushana period as well as of Gupta period.

In the Mathura sculptures, all the principle events of the Buddha's life have been depicted-- Birth, Enlightenment, First Sermon, and Maha-parinirvana. Some other scenes, treated are: Bathing of the Bodhisattva by the Nagas, Indra's homage to the Buddha in the Indrasala cave, Descent of the Buddha from heaven, Offering of the bowls to the Buddha by the Lokpalas.

Some of the Jatakas or the former birth stories of the Buddha have also been sculptured. The Mathura Museum has also a number of railing pillars, cross-bars of Buddhist railings, architectural fragments, decorative motifs and terracotta objects.

Some of the finest sculptures in the Mathura Museum are: 1. The Worship of Buddha's Alms Bowl, Stone-- the scene is in Tushita Heaven and the gods are worshipping the alms bowl of Buddha. 2. The Worship of Dharmachakra. 3. Stele representing the Conversation between the Buddha and Suddhodana-- all dating to the first century, BC. 4. Stele showing Buddha in Meditation. 5. Seated Buddha. 6. Standing Buddha with large scalloped halo. 7. Colossal Bodhisattva Image-- all dating to the first century AD. 8. Buddha standing in abhaya. 9. Seated Buddha in abhaya with webbed hand, wearing a shutter,-- all dating to the 2nd century AD. 10. One of the finest standing images of the Buddha, rich nimbus, thin drapery, with rippling folds, serene expression on face. 11. Standing Buddha image representing same characteristics, also recording the name of the sculpture Dinna, dated AD 434-435. 12. Buddha standing in abhaya pose-- all dating to the 5th century AD.

The State Museum, Lucknow: It was founded in 1863 as a Municipal Museum and was raised to the status of a provincial Museum in 1883. After Mathura Museum, this Museum has the largest collection of the Buddhist sculptures and other antiquities of the Kushana period discovered from Mathura.

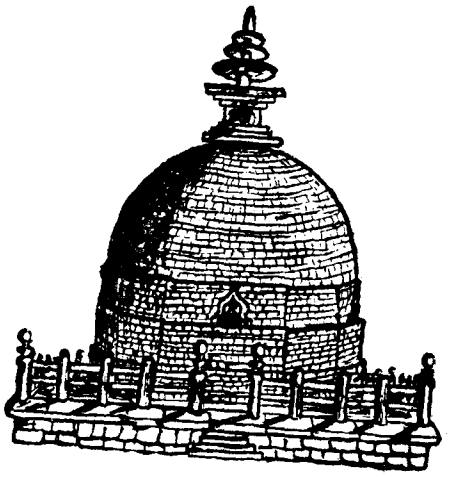
The Patna Museum: Established in 1917, the Patna Museum was moved to the present building in 1920. The archaeological collection of this Museum consists of the antiquities excavated from the ancient sites of Pataliputra, the capital of the Mauryan empire, terracotta figurines and bronze images specially from Kurkihar.

Chandigarh Museum: The city of Chandigarh, designed by the celebrated French architect Le Corbusier, and visualised for the rehabilitation of the Punjab's badly shattered social and cultural life, after partition in 1947, is now a joint Capital of Punjab and Haryana. Established in 1968 in an imposing building, the Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh provides a link with the glorious past of the Punjab. Majority

of the exhibits in the Chandigarh Museum came as part of its 40 per cent share of the objects from the Lahore Museum. The largest number of exhibits in Chandigarh Museum are the Gandhara sculptures of the Kushna period. The sculptures include images of the Buddha, Bodhisattvas and Scenes from Buddha's life. The Museum has also a number of terracotta and stucco Heads of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas.

The site Museums at the three Buddhist shrines-- Bodh Gaya, Sanchi and Vaisali have a number of interesting antiquities which tell the story of the by-gone glory of the shrines.

There are at least six Museums outside India where the Buddhist art has the pride of place. Two of them in Pakistan are: Central Museum, Lahore; and Peshawar Museum, Peshawar. The other Museums are: British Museum, London; fur Volkerkunde, Berlin; and Musee Guimet, Paris in Europe; and Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, U.S.A.



6

BUDDHISM AND HINDUISM

When the Aryans arrived in India in about 1500 BC there was a flourishing civilization in the Indus Valley which was much superior to that of the invading Aryans. The discovery of Indus Civilization which has essentially come to light through excavations at Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa (Pakistan), Rupar (Punjab), and Rangpur (Jhalawar District, Gujarat) has widened our perspective and proved wrong the claims of the Aryans for superiority over the original inhabitants. On the other hand, in the words of Piggot[1] the Aryan invasion of India must be regarded as "the arrival of barbarians into a region already highly organised into an empire based on a long established tradition of literate urban culture". The Pre-Aryan Civilization of India was urbanite and was at its zenith when the Aryans arrived. Their cities had great buildings, well planned public streets and drainage system. The Aryans, on the contrary, preferred rural life as they had little knowledge of the advantages and comforts of city life.

In the beginning, it seems, the Aryans were very proud of their conquest and fair complex and were adamant to have any intercourse with the original inhabitants. At that time the Aryan Society was divided mainly into three groups, i.e. priests, (Brahmins), warriors (Kshatriyas), and farmers and traders (Vaishyas). Later on as the years rolled by, the intermingling of the Aryans and Non-Aryans increased; the process of give and take commenced with the result that the Aryan Society absorbed many beliefs and customs which were prevalent amongst the Non-

Aryans. The Aryans were, however, very shrewd. They christened the Non-Aryans as Shudras and gave them the lowest status in the society. Later on to this fourth group of the Vedic Society were added poorer and fallen sections of the Aryans as well. Thus the Vedic period roughly from 1500 BC to 800 BC not only gave birth to caste-system but it encouraged untouchability also.

Whatever may be the claims of the Hindu Shastras regarding the spiritual elevation of the Aryan Society during the Vedic period, the social structure of the Society during this period, as revealed by the Vedic literature, folk tales, Jataka stories and other sources, was rigid, partisan, oppressive and even cruel for the vast mass of the people. Of course, the Aryans were religious minded, but for morality except as to customs within the clans, they had no respect. In those days, slavery was quite common. Contrary to the principle of freedom of profession, the children of the slaves were generally forced to take up the same profession in life. The condition of women was also far from satisfactory. As regards education, birth right of every human being, the large mass of middle class people and the lower strata of society were denied its benefits and the Brahmins and Kahatriyas had rather monopolised, it. Of all the communities, the condition of the Sudras was the worst. They were taught humility towards the higher castes by a series of brutal regulations. If he learned to recite the Vedas, the tongue of a Sudra was cut out; if he defamed a man of the higher caste or expressed contempt for his caste or name, a red-hot iron was thurst into his mouth. Not only that, the whole social structure was based on the principle of inequality, and that rule applied to their rights and privileges as well. Even the punishment for secular offences was based on the principle of inequality, the Brahmins always getting the minimum and the Sudras the maximum.[2]

The Buddha revolted against such oppressive social laws, and proclaimed His new philosophy of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity for the common welfare of all. Verily, it was the Buddha who for the first time attacked the fortresses of privileges, caste-system, ritualism, religious fanaticism, superstitions, and ignorance. Again it was the Buddha who expounded the transcendental philosophy of universal brotherhood and equality in all respects. Lord Buddha was, therefore, the creator of

the virtues like individual liberty, toleration, fellow-feeling, compassion, non-destruction of life(ahimsa), moral character, benevolence, service and sacrifice.

The Blessed One's concerted campaign against caste-system needs no narration. The doors of His Sangha were open to all irrespective of status in the society. He said each and every man or woman by dint of his or her labour is capable of attaining Nirvana. Not only that, He took practical steps to eradicate this evil. These steps were: His emphasis on not to accept anything unreasonable simply because it was recorded in the scriptures or was upheld by other authorities, exposing the myth of hereditary superiority claimed by the Brahmins, encouraging the downtrodden by dining at their houses; and accepting the low and lowly as equal members of the Sangha. He said, 'worth' not 'birth' should be the measure of a man.

The cult of sacrifices had a powerful hold on the minds of the early Aryans and the Vedic literature is nothing more than a collection of prayers and hyms to be chanted by the priests at the time of sacrifices. The Mantras of the Vedas are primarily invocations and prayers to deities like Indra, Varuna, Agni, Soma, Prajpati, Brahma and others for help against enemies, for gift of wealth, and for accepting the offerings of food, flesh and wine from the devotees. By about 600 BC this sacrifice cult had reached its climax and become a ritualistic and complicated affair without any material or spiritual gain to the devotees. Not only the slaughter of animals formed part of these sacrifices but the slaughtered animal was often intended for food. In fact, the Aryans ate beef, and termed a guest 'goghna', 'one for whom a cow is slain.

The Buddha condemned the bloody sacrifices and exhorted the people to abjure violence, to show compassion towards all living beings. The Buddhist appeal to humanity was so strong that the Hindus were compelled to abandon animal sacrifices. They even turned to vegetarian diet. Asoka, the first Buddhist Emperor, was the first Indian Monarch to proclaim the sanctity of animal life, and to induce people to abstain from eating of meat. Later on taking cue from the Buddhists, the Hindu saints preached the adoption of vegetarianism.

The contribution of Buddhism to Indian thought is tremendous. According to Dr. Surendranath Dasgupta,[3]

"Most of the highest teachings of the Puranas can be read word for word in the Buddhist scriptures which preceded them. Many of the myths and stories of the Puranas too owe their origin to the Jatakas and the Avadanas. The whole of Patanjali's Yoga sutra with its Vysabhasys does not seem to be anything more than a Hinduised version of Buddhist yoga".

The popular Hindu works like the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Bhagvad Gita are not only post-Buddhistic but also indebted to Buddhism in many respects. Marks what Prof. P. Lakshmi Narasu[4] says about the Mahabharata:

"The post-Buddhistic character of the Mahabharata is proved by its referring in XII, 15, 32 to those who cast off the Vedas and wander about as beggars shaved and wearing the yellow robe. The time of the whole Mahabharata may generally speaking be taken as falling between 200 and 400 AD. Whatever may be the original motive of the Mahabharata, there can be no doubt that the existing version is the result of a revision at the hands of Brahmanas for sectarian and caste purposes during the revivalistic period of Hinduism. It is an encyclopaedia of mythology, philosophy, history and the sacred law and has now the status of a 'fifth Veda' (panchamaveda), intended specially for the unlettered classes, including the upper divisions of the Sudra Caste, the so-called Sacchudras. What was the necessity for a fifth Veda? The answer is obvious. The scriptures of the heretical Buddhists were open to all without distinction of caste or creed. But the Brahmanical Vedas could be read only by the twice-born. Hence to cope with their Buddhist rivals the Brahmanas had to fabricate a book which could be accessible to the non-dvija, and even some concessions had to be made to him. It is therefore declared in III 216, 14-15 and XII 143, 46 that a Sudra not only may become assamskrito dvijah hereafter, but that he should be revered (senyah) like a regenerate person, if he is 'pure of heart and of subdued senses', since 'not birth, nor sacrament, nor learning, nor stock, (Santatih) make one regenerate, but only conduct' is the cause of regeneration. What Brahmanism, pure and simple, teaches in regard to the Sudra is clear from the Brahmanas and Sutras, and we do not find the above mentioned teaching even in Upanishads. It is pure Buddhism taught as Brahmanism".

The Bhagavadagita, which forms an essential part of the Mahabharata, has also been influenced in an appreciable

measure by the Buddhist thought. In verse 54, Chapter II of the Gita, Arjuna asks:

What is the way of one whose reason is well-founded; who is established in samadhi (supreme peace) O Kesava (Krishna)? How does he discourse, what is his state of being, how does he move about?

The following 18 slokas (55-72) in answer to this question are considered the most important teaching of the Gita. Therein is given description of a Sthita-prajna, 'one who is established in Wisdom'. In these verses, no where appears the word 'soul'; nor there is any reference to the soul-doctrine on which so much emphasis has been laid in other parts of the Gita. The reason being that these verses appear to have been literally lifted from the Buddhist scriptures. In fact, the verses 55-71 describe in veil the mind-training of a Buddhist monk in search of Nirvana. All of them can be traced to the Dhammapada, a collection of the select sayings of the Buddha. In order to show the indebtedness of the Gita to the Dhammapada we compare below just four of them:

B.G. 2.55: When man casts off all desires that have arisen in his mind and is satisfied in himself then he is called a Sthita-prajna (one who is of established wisdom).

D.P. 181: By renouncing the world and by solitude and meditation, he who casts off all desires of the mind, is a man of established Wisdom

B.G. 2.56: He who is not distressed in calamities in whom all longing for pleasure is lose, form whom affection, fear and wrath have passed away, he is called a Muni of steady wisdom.

D.P. 83: The good renounce lusting for every thing; the saintly prattle not with sensual craving. When affected by pleasure; or by pain; the wise show neither elation nor depression.

B.G. 2.60: The dangerous senses carry away by force the mind of a wise man, even though he exerts himself.

D.P. 35: Hard to control, unstable, is the mind; it flits wherever it listeth. Good is it to subdue the mind. A controlled mind brings happiness.

B.G. 2.62: When a man thinks of objects, attachment for them is formed. From attachment arises desire; from desire arises wrath.

D.P. 2.14: From attachment springs grief; from attachment springs fear. For him who is wholly free from attachment, there is neither grief nor fear.

Finally, the term 'nirvana' appears in the last sloka (B.G. 2.72) exactly with same import and meaning this term has in Buddhism.

Besides the above, the Gita explicity refers to many other Buddhist ideas:

(1) The words 'ayuktasya' and 'bhavana' in the verse II. 66 clearly convey the Buddhistic meaning. An 'ayukta' is he who does not practice yoga. 'Bhavana' means maitri, karuna, mudita and upekkha. In Buddhism, 'bhavana' is known for the four brahma-viharas, sublime abodes of the mind. In the Gita the word 'bhavana' has been used in this very sense.

(2) In the 20th verse of chapter, III, the words 'loka samgraham' are worthy of note. In the pre-Buddhist literature, no where those words find place. In Buddhism, however, they have a prominent place. In fact 'loka samgraham' (to act righteously) has been divided into four parts: (i) dana, (ii) gentle speech, (iii) to be of help to others, and (iv) to work for equality.

(3) The instructions regarding proper food, timely sleep and timely walking undoubtedly refer to some of the most important Buddhist teachings born of the Buddha's own personal experiences.

(4) The opinion referred to in the lines "some wise men say that the wrongful action is to be abandoned" is exactly what the Buddha held. The Anguttara, for example, says that the Buddha confessed himself to be an advocate of inaction in the sense that he argued in favour of abandoning wrongful act.

Pointing out the familiarity of certain ideas, words and passages in the Gita and other Buddhist Scriptures, Dr. Kashi Nath Upadhayaya[5] says.

"The term 'nirvana', even though its verbal form (nistva) is found in Vedic period, seems to have been used for the first time in its strict technical sense in Buddhism. In the whole of the pre-Buddhistic Upanishads, it is nc where found. So to ignore its occurrence in the Bhagavadgita (as has been done by most of the scholars) in which it is used as many as five times does not seem justified. Again, virtues like nirvaira (XI.55) advesa, karuana and maitri (XII. 13) also are striking peculiarities of the B.G., and Buddhism, and those words do not occur in the Upanishads. Similarly 'raga and dvesa' occur in compound in the B.G. (II.64, III.34 and XVIII.51) just as in the Pali texts. The way in which they are used

in B.G. II.64 and Dhammapada 369, as well as in B.G. XVIII.51 and Dhammapada 377 has a close resemblance. The epithets used for a muni in the B.G like aniketa (XII.19) nirmama (II.71; III.30; XII.13 and XVIII.53), nirasi (III.30; IV.21), nirasraya (IV.20) nirahara (II.59), naiskarmya (III.4; XVIII.49, samaduhkha-sukha (II.15, 38; XII.13, 18; XIV.24), tulya-ninda-stuti (XII 19; XIV.24), tulya-man-apamana (XIV.15), etc., are exactly the same as their corresponding Pali words of the Nikayas. None of these words is traceable in the pre-Buddhistic Upanishads.

Then the vices like krodha, mada, dambha, atimanita and asuya enumerated in the B.G. (XVI. 3, 4, 10 and 18) are strikingly similar to those found in the Amagandha Sutta (kodho, mado, thambho... usuyya... manatimano (Sn. 44), and people having such vices are alike called 'naradhama (B.G. XVI. 19 and Suttanipata, 44). Again just as Buddha regards nana-yanna (Digha Nikaya 1.147 and Kutadanta Sutta) to be the best of all sacrifices, so also the B.G. (IV.33) speaks of the jnana-yajna as the best. Similarly the teachings of 'Samacariya' in Buddhism (D.I.3; M.1. 125-9, 423-4) is well reflected in the teachings of 'Samatva' in B.G. II. 38 and XIV. 24 and 25. Again the middle path of Buddhism is adopted in the B.G. while prescribing the practice of Yoga (VI. 11, 16 and 17). The gradual psychological stages in the process of concentration as described in Buddhism (D. I.73; M.I.37), viz. pamujjam, piti, passaddhi, and sukha are somewhat similarly found in B.G. II. 64-66. Then the life has been characterised as suffering in the typical Buddhistic style (B.G. XIII. 8: janma-mrtyu-jaravyadhi-duhkha-dosanudarsanam)."

The Hindu revival movement received great impetus at the hands of Sankaracharya in the 9th century. He too, as says Dr. Das Gupta,[6] "largely borrowed his doctrine, his phraseology, his dialectics and his method of approach from Buddhism. Not only Sankara, but many of his followers like Sriharsa, Anandjnana and others who have constructed the Vedanta into a rational system of philosophy deliberately followed the footprint of Nagarjuna and other Buddhist writers."

Commenting upon the origin of Advaita, V.G. Nair[7] says:

"Gaudapada, grand teacher of Sankara, was well versed in Buddhist scriptures and has been acclaimed as a Buddhist saint by many scholars. In his Mandukya Karikas

the Commentary on the Mandukya Upanishad, he has mentioned the name of the Buddha several times. In a Mangalacharnam, found in his karikas, Gaudapada has paid reverential homage to the Buddha. He has included many phrases and metaphors in the karikas which are well known in Buddhist literature. All these facts go to prove that Gaudapada has adjusted the Buddhist doctrines to his Vedanta design. Inspired by Gaudapada, Sankara wrote his commentaries on the major Upanishads and expounded his mayavada, mithyavada and advaita philosophy. Many eminent scholars hold that Sankara himself was a great devotee of the Buddha. In the Padma Purana of the Hindus, Sankara is dubbed as a Buddhist in disguise and his mayavada is to be rejected as an untrue doctrine. Madhvacharya and Yamunacharya have made the same charges against Sankara. 'Among orthodox Hindus, Sankara, is known as Pracchanna Buddha. Sankara in his Dasavatara Stotra has painted the Buddha as 'the Emperor among the Yogis of Kaliyuga', the present age, and has prayed to Him for blessing him with full enlightenment. All these facts go to prove that the Father of Advaita Vedanta formulated his doctrines after the philosophical concepts originally expounded by the Buddha and later developed by Nagarjuna."

The Hindus not only reformed their systems on the basis of the Buddhistic practice, they also appropriated the Buddhist shrines in due course, and replaced the Buddhist images with those of Hindu gods and goddesses.

Apart from the hundreds of minor Viharas converted into Hindu temples, the important Buddhist shrines which met this fate include the Great Maha Bodhi Temple at Buddha Gaya as well. The Seat of Buddha's Enlightenment was in the possession of a Hindu Mahant till 1952. Similarly, when Cunningham in 1860-61 discovered Kusinara, the sacred spot where the Buddha had entered into Mahaparinirvana, he found that the cremation stupa had been converted into a Hindu temple and on the top of it stood the shrine of Rambhar Bhavani. Among the shrines which still continue to be dedicated to the Hindu gods, mention may be made of the Caityas of Chezrala and Ter in Andhra Pradesh which are now Siva and Vishnu temples. The temple of Madhava at Sal Kusa, opposite Gauhati in Assam, was once a sacred shrine of pilgrimage for the Buddhists. Sankaracharya is also said to have founded his Sringeri Math (karnataka) on the site of a Buddhist monastery.

The famous Jagannatha temple at Puri in Orissa was also originally a Buddhist shrine. This has been proved beyond doubt by a recent discovery of a stone of Asokan polish with the symbols of Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha which are almost exactly like the images of Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra. Commenting on this episode, Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab[8] writes:

"During the reign of Asoka, the Savaras of Orissa were converted to Buddhism. A Buddhistic Stupa was constructed at Puri and the symbol of Tri-Ratna was there. By the first century BC or the first century AD when Mahayana (The Great Path) was introduced and images of Buddha and Bodhisattvas were worshipped, the simple-minded Savaras began to worship the Symbol of Tri-Ratna. The worship of Symbols is still to be found in the worship of Svastika which is really a combination of two Pali letters, SU(सु) and TI (ति) for SUTI is the Pali form of Svastika. The three symbols taken together were called Jagannatha and that Jagannatha is another name for Buddha is known from Tibetan sources. So the name of Jagannatha is Buddhistic in origin. Later on, Jagannatha was identified with Vishnu when the Tantras were written. Afterwards when the worship of the images came into vogue, three symbols were represented on pieces of wood and naturally an attempt was made to give them the appearance of human beings as far as possible.

Festivals such as the Snana Yatra (Bathing Festival) and (Car Festival) were introduced after these wooden images came into existence. Snana Yatra is celebrated on the full moon day of Jaishtha. To bring out the image of Buddha some days after the commencement of the year and then to give it a bath was a part of Buddhistic ceremonials. The accounts of India left by Chinese travellers corborate this statement. The Car Festival like the Bathing Festival is of Buddhistic origin. Fahien (fifth century) gives a graphic account of the Car Festival of Jagannatha in modern days. Fahien states that the Car Festival of Khotan was held in the month of Ashadha, and the king swept the floors of the cars. The Car Festival of Jagannatha is held about the same time and the king of Orissa performs the same menial office of sweeping. There is no place for Car Fastivals in the ceremonials in connection with the worship of Krishna-Vasudeva or any other manifestation of Vishnu. Another fact which

deserves notice is that the entire worship of Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra during the period from Snana Yatra to Ratha Yatra is performed by the Daitas who are descendants of the Savaras."

Another example we would like to quote here is of the Vishnupada temple at Gaya. The city of Gaya is at present an important place of pilgrimage for the Hindus. It has numerous sacred centres-- temples, trees, tanks, rivers and hills-- where the shraddha sacrificers are enjoined to offer funeral cakes in memorium to their dead ancestors. Of all the sacred spots in the Gaya Kshetra, the temple of Vishnupada (Vishnu's foot), situated on the bank of the river Falgu, is the most famous shrine. It is said to mark the place where Lord Vishnu placed his foot on the head of the demon Gaya, and made him motionless. Though for long the footprints in the Vishnupada temple have been treated and venereted by the Hindus as the legendary feet of Vishnu, yet in reality it is not so. The foot-prints in the Vishnupada are the foot-prints of Lord Buddha, and were appropriated by the Hindus after the downfall of Buddhism in Gaya and around.

Gaya was atleast twice visited by Lord Buddha-- once on His way from Rajagriha to the Uruvilva Vana, and again on His return from Sarnath, immediately after turning the Wheel of Law (Dharma-Chakra pravartana). On the second occasion, the Blessed One had also delivered a sermon on 'burning fire of passions (Aditta-Pariyaya-Sutta-Samyutta-Nikaya XXXV, 28) while camping on the Gayasirsa hill, the divine mountain, now known as the Brahmayoni hill. Therefore, as Buddhism spread in India and the flow of pilgrims to Buddha Gaya, the Seat of Buddha's Enlightenment increased, several shrines came up at Gaya. One of them was on the spot where the Buddha had first set His foot after crossing the river Neranjara (Falgu) while coming to Gaya from Rajagriha. Another stood on the Gayasirsa hill where the Buddha had delivered 'the fire sermon'. The third one was on the place where the Kasyapa brothers (Gaya Kasyapa, Nadi Kasyapa, and Uruvilva Kasyapa) were born. In the seventh century AD when Hiuen Tsang visited Gaya, he saw three massive stupas on the above noted places. Of them, the stupa enshrining the footprint of the Buddha was particularly the Chief object of worship with the pious devotees in and around Gaya.

When Buddhism declined the Hindus appropriated Gaya and converted all the Buddhist shrines there into the abodes of their gods and goddesses. In the case of the Buddha-pada, the foot prints of Lord Buddha, they went a step further and declared them to be the foot prints of Lord Vishnu. Apparently, this was done by the clever Brahmin priests to win over the masses as says[9] Dr. Rajendralal Mitra. "Next to Chaityas, the most important object was the impression of the Buddha's feet. In fact it was the first to come into worship, and only veneration was shown to the relics of the great reformer. In later days, however, when the images of the last Buddha became popular, the feet which constituted only a part thereof, fell to the background. But they were never altogether given up, and in all Buddhist countries carving of Buddha's feet are held in great veneration. In many temples they occupy the most prominent place; and when the Hindus got hold of Gaya, the popular feeling in favour of the most sacred foot-print there was so high that unable to set it aside, the Brahamans recognised it under the name of Vishnu's feet, as the most-sacred object of worship at the place."

The foot print in Vishnupada temple, which was rebuilt in the closing years of the eighteenth century by Ahilya Bai Holkar, a Maratha queen, is engraved in the basalt. Now there are no distinguishing marks on it as centuries of washing and scrubbing have obliterated the usual Buddhist symbols. In spite of that, it is truism to say that the foot-print in the Vishnupada was originally a Buddhist emblem which was appropriated by the Hindu priests, after the decline of Buddhism. The following conclusive evidence will prove our point:

Firstly, the city of Gaya was elevated to its present status in the Hindu world only after the downfall of Buddhism in India.

Secondly, in order to make the Hinduised Gaya popular with the masses and to create a halo around its sanctity, the Hindus had to invent the fantastic and incredible legend of Gaya Asura.

Thirdly, no where else in India has the worship of foot prints received such a high place and honour in the cults of the Hindus.

Fourthly, in the Gaya Mahatmya (Vayu Purana) there is a verse which enjoins that the pilgrim before offering the funeral cake at Vishnupada should go to Bodh Gaya and salute the Bodhi Tree. Even a special mantra has

been provided for saluting the Bodhi Tree. It says: "I salute, thee, repeatedly salute, Aswattha tree, the tremendous leaved, the yajna (sacrifice personified), the Bodhisattva, the eternal source of permanence.....O noble Pipal tree, since Narayana always reside within thee, therefore are thou the most beneficient among the trees".(Chap. III 24 - 27 and 80).

Fifthly, the Gayawals, priets of the Vishnupada temple area, in the opinion of some scholars,[10] are the descendents of the Buddhist monks who were converted by Shankaracharya to the faith of Hinduism and persuaded to act as Hindu priets under the name of Gayawals. Significantly enough, the Gayawals, having no lineage within the Hindu caste-- structure, claim themselves to have been specially created by the Brahma to act as shraddha priests at Gaya.

Among other Buddhist shrines which are today Hindu temples are: Dharamasthala, Kanchipuram and Tirupati. About the famous Tirupati temple in Andhra Pradesh, A.R. Kulkarni says:[11]

"The worship of the deity of Balaji in the famous Tirupathi Temple in Andhra Pradesh is also the worship of Buddha. The Dashera or the tenth day of Ashwin (Bright fortnight) is celebrated as the birth day of Balaji. It may be here remembered that Dashera is the birthday of Buddha according to Hindu tradition. From the fact that the birthday of both Balaji and the Buddha is the tenth day of Ashwin, we can legitimately infer that Balaji is Buddha. It is further significant to know that there is no history both of Balaji and of Vitthal like the history of Rama and Krishna. Surely Vitthal and Balaji are not fictitious deities. The tradition is that both the deities are the deities of the Buddha."

A.R.Kulkarni adds:

".....The deity of Vitthal at Pandharpur is the rallying point of the Bhagwat-panthis in Maharashtra. In fact the very name Bhagwat Dharma means the Dharma of Bhagwan Buddha. It should here be remembered that Bhagwa is the Pali name of the Buddha in the Buddhist scriptures and Bhagwan is its vernacular equivalent. It is also well known that Tukaram, the great saint of the Bhagwat Dharma describes the Vitthal as Buddha when he says that the name of the 9th Incarnation who is standing here before me on bricks is Buddha. The word Vitthal is made up of two words Vit+Thal. Vit means brick and Thal is a Pali word meaning Sthal or Seat. It will thus be clear that the meaning of the word 'Vitthal' is one whose seat is 'Vit' or bricks. As the word 'Thal' is a Pali word we have reason to say that this deity of Vitthal must have come into existence at a time when Pali was in vogue. This takes us to the reign of Asoka who is said to have constructed about eighy-four thousand temples of the Buddha. And the temple of Vitthal in Pandharpur is one such temple."

The Nirguna saints of medieval India were the immediate successors to the Buddhist savants, the exponents of the Sahaja Cult, the last phase of Buddhism in India. The Buddhist Sahajayas, Saraha, Tailapada, Luyipada and others had employed poetry in the spoken language of the masses to express their philosophy of life. The saints like Kabir too adopted poetry in the spoken language of the masses as a vehicle for propagation of their ideas.

"The Sahajiyas" says S.B. Dasgupta[12] were averse to the elaborate formalities of religion and concentrated their whole attention on the attainment of the blissful ultimate nature as the highest truth, for which attainment they took help of the natural propensities of man. Deepest was their hatred towards those recondite scholars who would try to know the truth through discursive reason." Saraha says, "One has no need of Tantra or Mantra, or of the images or the Dharmas-- all these are causes of confusion. Through self-conceit the truth is never perceived, - but the blame is often put wrongly on the yanas (i.e., the ways or schools for attaining bodhi). All are hypnotised by the system of the jhanas (meditation), but none cares to realise his own self. This is the truth which Saraha preaches,-- never does he care for any Tantra or Mantra."

The spirit of revolt and criticism-- of the Buddhist Sahajiyas, was continued by Kabir with more vigour. At least one-third of the literature of Kabir is devoted to criticism against the orthodox ideas. As a religious apostle, Kabir was neither a Hindu nor a Muslim. He criticised both the communities unreservedly. He says,-- "The Hindus have died by worshipping the gods and the Turks have died by going on pilgrimage; the yogins have died by matting hair,-- none of them have got at the truth". Against metaphysical erudition and the recital of the sacred scriptures the criticism of Kabir was equally strong. He says that people read the four Vedas, but

none makes any enquiry about the Lord. The world is dying of reading books,-- yet none have become the real Pundit".

Some of the poems of Kabir can be read word by word with the poems of Sarahapada indicating complete identity of views. Kabir even refers more than once to the Sahaja cult of the Buddhists. Says Kabir, All speak of the Sahaja,-- but none knows what Sahaja actually is. That is really Sahaja, through which a man leaves off all his objects of desire,-- that is called Sahaja, which keeps the five (senses) well-controlled,-- that is really Sahaja, through which the Lord is realised in a natural way."

Again like the Buddhist poet Saraha-pada, Kabir says-- "Within the form resides the formless, his whereabouts are known to none. Musk is there in the naval cavity, yet the deer is roaming about in the forest (in search of it); exactly in the same way, Rama is residing within every body, but the world does not perceive." Again he says-- "In the lake of the body there is a lotus without parallel, and on it resides the Supreme Being of supreme lustre-of Him there is neither any sign or form." The Buddhist Sahajiyas declared that all the sacred rivers, sacred mountaines, places of pilgrimage are within this body. Kabir also says,-- "Within the heart are the Ganges and the Jamuna and there is the ghat (bathing step) of Sahaja Sunya and Kabir has erected his temple there." The ultimate state of bliss is frequently described by Kabir as the Sahaja-samadhi just like the Buddhist Sahajiyas. "This state of Sahaja is to be attained through the final arrest of the functions of the mind,-- and this Sahaja is the state of vacuity and hence it is often called a non-dual state of supreme bliss."

Speaking about the similarities between the teachings of the Nirguna Saints and the teachings of the Buddha, Sri Swami Mahi Dassji Maharaj,[13] Head of the Sant Mat Sat-Sang, says.

"People who embrace Buddhism are initiated into Buddhism by affirming their faith in Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. Buddham Sharnam Gacchami, Dhammam Sharnam Gacchami and Sangham Sharnam Gacchami are the three often repeated refuges so sonorously recited by the devout Buddhists the world all over. Faith in the Teacher, his Teachings and in the Sat Sang are equally and forcefully enjoined in all Nirgunasects."

"There is great similarity with the ethical Teachings as well. In Buddhism every devout Buddhist makes a solemn promise every day to abstain from all acts of violence and slaughter, sexual immorality, falsehood, theft and also to abjure the use of intoxicants. My reading of the Nirguna saints' Teachings is that all of them without exception also preached the same."

"Therefore, when my revered Teacher discovered this similarity and realised the need of a daily discipline in the life of the people, he made Panchasila obligatory in his Satsang. This practice is being continued."

"The goal of holy life is also the same in both these Teachings as the holy life is lived for the sake of Nirvana and the descriptions given of this state are identical. In describing the state of Nirvana, Lord Buddha says that it is a state which is indescribable. There is no earth, no water, no fire. It is not this world, nor the world beyond, Sun and Moon do not exist there. Man cannot be said to have so journeyed to that place nor can a man be said to have returned from there or to be abiding there. Birth and death do not exist. It is without dependence, self existing, unique and without woe. These descriptions lie scattered in the Digha Nikaya and many Buddhist texts. The whole thing briefly put is indescribable as all familiar landmarks are missing but is a state of great Bliss. Exactly identical descriptions have been given by the Nirguna Saints. Kabir says, "I tell you of that country, where day and night do not exist; sun and moon do not appear and stars do not twinkle. Both light and shade do not exist. There is no earth, no sky and no dread of Death. Day and night alternate not, so there is neither light nor darkness. All sounds are missing there, no sign exists. It is imageless meditation and a great silence."

Finally, says Swami Mahi Dassji Maharaj that "Lord Buddha is treated by them as the first and foremost Nirguna Saint, and the Dhammapada is read as a sacred text, and Panch Sila are recited daily by each devout Sat Sangi". So in effect, the followers of Sant Mat are following Buddhism in their day-to-day life.

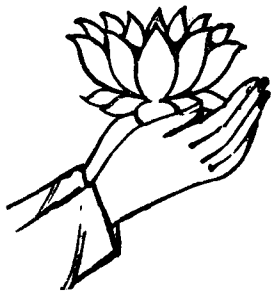
According to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan,[14] "Buddhism has left a permanent mark on the culture of India. Its influence is visible on all sides. The Hindu faith has absorbed the best of its ethics. A new respect for life, kindness to animals, a sense of responsibility and an endeavour

after higher life have been brought to the Indian mind with renewed force. The Brahamanical systems, as a result of Buddhist influence, cast into the shade those parts of their religion which were irreconcilable with humanity and reason".

Mahatma Gandhi also expressed similar views. He says:[15]

"It is my deliberate opinion that the essential part of the teachings of the Buddha now forms an integral part of Hinduism. It is impossible for Hindu India to-day to trace her steps and go behind the great reformation that Gautama effected in Hinduism. By his immediate sacrifice, by his great renunciation and by the immaculate purity of his life, he left an indelible impress upon Hinduism, and Hinduism owes an eternal debt of gratitude to that great teacher".

Verily, the influence of Buddhism on Hindu thought and culture, customs and manners, beliefs and practices is par excellence. And the present form of Hinduism has underneath its surface a thick layer of Buddhism.



7

BUDDHISM AND JAINISM

The life stories of the Buddha and Mahavira, the two great religious prophets born in India in the sixth century BC look alike to some extent. They are often referred to by similar titles or epithets. The Buddha, the Englightened One, is also called as Arhant, Sambuddha, Sugata, and Tathagata, meaning thereby that He is "perfectly enlightened, blessed and worthy, abounding in wisdom and goodness, endowed with knowledge of the worlds, unsurpassed as a guide to erring mortals, and a teacher of gods and men". Mahavira is also sometimes referred to by similar titles or epithets but the Jains prefer to call Him a Jina, a conqueror, and Tirthankara, a ford maker or a guide over the ocean of Samsara.

The Buddha was born at Lumbini, near Kapilavastu, the capital city of the Sakyas. The personal name of the Buddha was Siddhartha and his family name was Gautama. He was the son of King Suddhodana and Queen Mahamaya. As a prince, he grew up in the midst of luxury, beauty and plenty. But slowly and slowly he was getting weary of his surroundings and was becoming more and more contemplative. At the age of 29, Siddhartha left his palace home, the life of luxury and pleasure to seek solution of his mental unrest in the homeless life of an ascetic.

After leaving Kapilavastu, the Prince turned mendicant trekked on foot a distance of about 400 miles and reached Rajagriha (Rajgir) which was then renowned as the abode of great teachers and leaders of thought. Not satisfied with the teachings of Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta, he marched forward towards the forest of Uruvela (Uruvilva) Vana some forty miles away. For six years,

the Bodhisatta practised rigid austerities and self-mortification. Still he could not attain what he sought. Convinced of the futility of mortification of the flesh, he abandoned the path of fasting, and accepted a bowl of rice pudding offered by Sujata, daughter of the chief of the neighbouring village. Annoyed with Gautama on partaking of food, his five companions left him. Thus the Buddha-to-be was left alone to pursue his path.

Having refreshed himself with food, the Bodhisatta reflected on his past experience which had failed. Determined to achieve enlightenment; to know the ultimate truth; he came to the large Pipal tree on the right bank of river Neranjara, now known as Bodh Gaya. There he sat cross-legged, determined not to leave the place until he had attained the supreme and absolute wisdom. On the fateful night when Gautama was about to attain the Buddhahood, the Mara, the celebrated Lord of evil thoughts and evil passions swung into action and attempted in various ways to thwart his efforts. But all efforts of Mara failed, and the evil one disappeared discomforted. And when the morning star appeared in the eastern sky, Gautama attained supreme enlightenment. He became Buddha.

Thereafter, the Buddha travelled for full 45 years from town to town and from village to village preaching the newly found Dhamma. Soon he attracted a large number of followers. His disciples came from all walks of life. They included high and holy as well as low and lowly.

Mahavira was senior to the Buddha. He was born on the Chaitra Purnima day at Vaishali in Bihar. His personal name was Vardhamana and his father's name was Siddhartha. His mother, Trisala was the eldest daughter (sister according to another tradition) of King Cetaka of Vaishali.

It is interesting to note that Mahavira was reluctant to take birth in a Brahmin family. It is said that the embroyo was transferred from the womb of a Brahmin woman, Devananda, to that of Trisala, a Kashatriya lady, as Mahavira refused to take birth in a beggarly caste. Like the mother of Buddha, Trisala had also auspicious dreams before Mahavira was born. All this was taken as an indication of divine events by his parents and they looked forward to the birth of the child with great hopes. And when Mahavira was born, he was brought up with

tender care, love and affection. He was also married.

When Mahavira was about 30 years age, his father and mother passed away. This distressed him greatly, and soon thereafter, Mahavira renounced the wordly ties and joined the order of monks of Parshva. For thirteen months thereafter, Mahavira wore clothes. Then he discarded completely the clothes and wandered naked from place to place as a mendicant monk, never staying longer than a single night in a village or more than five nights in a town. Mahavira performed a prolonged course of severe penace for 12 years. In the ultimate, in the 13th year of his wandering life, Mahavira attained Kevalajnana "complete knowledge" on the tenth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Vaisakha while seated under a shady Sala tree on the northern bank of Rajupalika near Jambhika-- grama in Bihar. Thus at the age of 42, he became Jina-- the conqueror or victor.

The Jaina system[1] was in vogue even prior to the advent of Mahavira. The members of the Jaina order were then called Niganthas, 'the unfetterad'. Mahavira merely reformed and reinforced the teachings of Parshva, 23rd Tirthankara who is said to have lived 250 years before him. After becoming a Tirthankara, Mahavira lived for 30 years during which period He is said to have gathered a good number of followers. But the Buddha had an edge over Mahavira. With his pleasing personality, serene and dignified demeanier, the Buddha became very popular and was welcomed with due respect, courtesy and kindness, wherever he went. The position of Mahavira was, however, just reverse to that of the Buddha. He always wandered naked; was unkempt and never bathed. This kept him secluded and made him little unpopular. In fact, sometimes the people mocked at him, and even beat him.

Both the Buddha and Mahavira went on preaching tours throughout the year except during the rainy season. This period of four months is called 'Vassa' in Buddhism and 'Chaturmas' in Jainism. Out of 45 rainy seasons Buddha spent 25 at Sravasti, 5 at Rajgriha, 3 at Mount Caliya, 2 at Vaisali and one each at Sarnath, Kosambi, Kapilavastu, Veranja, Alavi, Ekanala, Parileyyaka, Mountain Makula, Sunsumara Giri, and celesial realm Tevatimsa. As for Mahavira, out of 42 rainy seasons He spent as many as 12 at Vaisali, 14 at Rajagriha and Nalanda, 6 at Mithila, 3 at Campa and Pitthicampa, 2 at Bhaddiya,

one each at Atthiyaggama, Alabhiya, Paniyabhumi, Sravasti, and Pava.

The Buddha was the junior contemporary of Mahavira. They lived and preached almost at the same time in the same geographical zone. There is, however, no evidence to show that they ever met though on more than one occasion Mahavira, who is known as Nigantha Nataputta in the Buddhist Scriptures, is seen sending one of his disciples to question the Buddha about the basic tenets of his teaching. Two such examples are the visits of Upali and Abhaya Raj Kumara described in Sutta Nos. 56 and 58 of Majjhima Nikaya. Mahavira also appears to have met the followers of the Buddha and discussed religious problems with them. One of the lay disciples of the Buddha, who was well-versed in the Dhamma and was quoted by the Blessed One to be a model and guiding standard to other lay disciples was upasaka Citta of Macchikasanda near Sravasti. Once his village was visited by Mahavira. Citta called upon the Jaina teacher. A brief resume of their dialogue is recorded in the Samyutta Nikaya (41.8).

The Buddha attracted followers from all walks of life, and from all religious sects. The prominent among the Jaina Converts were: Nanduttara, a renowned speaker and a great debater. Upali, Abhayaraj Kumara, and Senapati Simha. While welcoming new converts, the Buddha cautioned them not to antagonise their erstwhile co-religionists. The story of Senapati Simha of Vriji shows remarkable tolerance of the Buddha. Prior to his coming under the influence of the Blessed One, Senapati Simha was a lavish patron of the Jainas (Nigranthas). On being requested, the Buddha accepted him as a lay disciple but urged him not to withdraw the regular alms which he had been giving to the Jainas.

The Buddha said, "Be ye lamps unto yourselves. Work your own salvation with diligence." Mahavira says, "Man thou art thine own friend. Why wishet thou for a friend beyond thyself." Thus in both the cases, emphasis is on self-help, self-discipline. But there is a fundamental difference in approach. The Buddha holds that 'mind' is the nerve centre of every human activity. The very first verse of the Dhammapada says, "All mental states have mind as their fore-runner, mind is their chief, and they are mind-made. If with a pure mind, one speaks or acts, happiness follows him close like his never--

departing shadow". Buddhism lays great stress on the need of inward concentration and meditation which leads in time to the development of the inner spiritual faculties. In Buddhism, therefore, Vipassana, mind-training is more important than the various abstinences which border upon asceticism. In Jainism, however 'body' is more important as reliance is placed on austerities or penances which are considered essential to ensure wearing out and ultimately destroying the effect of sinful deeds committed in former existences.

The Jainas believe in the theory of a permanent soul. In fact, they hold that not only animals and plants but the smallest particles of the elements, earth, fire, water, and wind are also endowed with souls. Mahavira, therefore, believed in the indestructibility of the two primordial cosmic elements; nature (ajiva) and soul (jiva). On the other hand, the Buddha held that life is constantly changing and all conditioned things are transient. Whatever is transient, is painful, and where change and sorrow prevail, the question of a permanent immortal does not arise. The Buddha in particular criticised the theory of permanent soul as a selfish system from the ethical point of view, as it meant the solitary pursuit by the soul of its own release. He did not accept that there was an immortal entity which survived the death of the body and was born in other forms through a series of incarnations. Nevertheless, the principle of rebirth was accepted by the Buddha.

The essence of Buddhism lies in the Four Noble Truths: Suffering; its cause; its cessation; and the path leading to the cessation of suffering. The way to Nirvana, emancipation in Buddhism or the path that leads to cessation of suffering, higher wisdom and peace of mind is known as the Noble Eightfold Path or the Middle Path. This path consists of: Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. Of the eight factors of the Noble Eightfold path, the first two are grouped under the heading of Wisdom, the following three under Morality, and the last three under Concentration. But according to the order of development, the sequence is as follows: I. Morality (Sila), 2, Concentration (Samadhi) and 3. Wisdom (Panna).

In Jainism, the Dharma that leads to Moksha, release from the transmigration is made up of: Right Belief,

Right Knowledge and Right Conduct. Mahavira says, there is no right conduct without right knowledge and no right knowledge without the right belief. These are called tri-ratna.

As a stepping stone to the path of spiritual progress, the Buddha asked the people to practice constantly the five precepts (Panca Sila), that is, to abstain from: taking life, stealing, adultery, telling lies, and intoxicating drink. There are five basic vows in Jainism also. Parshva had prescribed the four vows of: non-injury, truthfulness, non-stealing and non-possession. Mahavira added another, the vow of chastity. Together, these five vows are known as Panchayama dharma. Of the five Jaina vows, four are similar to the Buddhist precepts. However, the Jaina vow of non-injury (ahimsa) implies that a Jain is not to eat even vegetables which grow underground, and are said to be home of infinite minute life of a low form.

The Buddhist ethical code of discipline for the monks contains as many as 227 rules which an aspirant for the attainment of Nirvana is expected to observe. A similar strict, rather more rigid, code of discipline has been prescribed for the Jaina monks. In Mahavira's view, "the full blaze of omniscience in the Jiva is impossible of accomplishment without the practice of regulated cause of self-discipline and the conquest of Karmas through austerities and penances". Parshva had allowed his disciples to wear one under-garment but Mahavira completely forbade the use of clothes and declared nudity a virtue. Other austerities prescribed by him include avoidance of bathing, not brushing the teeth and to take food in a standing posture. In tune with their basic concept of realisation through severe penance, the Jaina monastic rules go to extreme to the extent of recommending religious suicide-- to starve onself to death by slow degrees. The Buddha, on the other hand, having considered extreme asceticism a spiritual blind alley renounced it, and formulated a systematic rational method of self-discipline. He enunciated the golden mean of Middle Path, that is, to avoid the extreme of self-indulgence which is vulgar and profitless, and the extreme of self-mortification, which is painful and equally profitless. The Buddha also declares suicide useless and futile.

Like the Buddhists, the Jains are also divided into two main sects. Sometime after the passing away of Mahavira, Jains of Magadha began to put up white clothes.

These changes were, however, opposed by some orthodox monks. This led to a schism in the Jaina Church. The two factions came to be known as Digambaras (sky-clad), those who discarded all forms of dress, and Svetambaras (clad in white), those who used white cloth. The Digambaras regard the complete nakedness as the essential requirement for attaining salvation.

The Buddhist scriptures are in Pali, the language of Magadha in the days of the Buddha. The Pali Canon is commonly referred to as Tipitaka or Tripitaka i.e. 'Threefold Basket'. The three Pitakas are the Vinaya-Pitaka, Sutta-Pitaka and Abhidhamma-Pitaka. The Pali Canon was compiled immediately after the Maha-parinirvana of the Buddha at a Council held at Vaisali. The Pali Canon was further edited by the Third Council held at Pataliputra (Patna) during the reign of Asoka. The Pali scriptures were committed to writing for the first time on palm leaves in Sri Lanka (Ceylon) in the first century BC.

The language of the Jaina scriptures is a Prakrit called Ardhamagadhi. But the commentaries are both in Prakrit (Jaina Maharashtri) and Sanskrit. Both the Jaina sects are of the unanimous view that the teachings of Mahavira, the main source of their scriptures-- were collected by his disciple Indrabhuti or Gautama who passed away 12 years after the nirvana of Mahavira. The Jaina scriptures are collectively known as Siddhanta or Agama. The first group of Siddhanta consisted of 14 Parvas which have since been lost.

According to the Svetambara tradition, Jaina Acharyas held, like the Buddhists, four Councils. The present Jaina Canon of the Svetambaras was settled at the 4th Council held at Valabhi under the Chairmanship of Devardhi Ksamasramana after 980 or 993 years of Mahavira's nirvana or say in the beginning of the sixth century AD.

The Digambaras are of the view that the original Canon (as preached by Mahavira) is no longer in existence as the same was lost completely 683 years after Mahavira's nirvana as the Jaina Acharyas could not gain proficiency in all the Angas. They have, however, prescribed detailed accounts of the structure and content of the lost Angas in the written works of ancient Acharyas of their tradition.

Since the Jaina Canon was compiled several centuries after the Buddhist Canon was reduced to writing, the

Jaina Canon appears to have been greatly influenced by the Pali Canon. Bhagchandra Jain says[2]: "Pundarika Addhyan of the Sutrakratanga and Saddharma-Pundarika, Vipakasutra and Avadanasatka, and Karmasatka, Thananga and Anguttara, Uttaradhyana and Dhammapada and the Jataka are very closely related to each other in subject matter. The Svetambara Agamas are called Ganipitaka as the Buddhist scriptures are called Tripitaka. Thus the Svetambara Agamas are undoubtedly influenced by the Buddhist scriptures."

According to R.C. Dutt,[3] "There can be little doubt that the early tenets of the first Nigranthas have long since been modified and completely transformed; and that the more cultured section of that body, who adopted a white garment, continuously borrowed their maxims and precepts, their rules and customs, their legends and traditions from Buddhism, which was the prevailing religion of India after the third century BC. Thus the Jainas drifted more and more towards Buddhism, for long centuries, until they had adopted the substance of the Buddhist religion as their own, and very little of the early tenets of the unclad Nigranthas was left. It was then - in the fifth century AD,- that their scriptures were recorded, and it is no wonder that those scriptures appear like a copy of the Buddhist scriptures recorded six centuries earlier".

At times even the language and style are very much alike. For example[4] a Stanza of the Uttaradhyana (9.44), viz.

Mase Mase tuje balo kusaggenath tu bhunjee.
Ne so sukha adhammasa kalam agghai solasim.

has a very close resemblance to the verse No. 70 of the Dhammapada:

Mase mase kusaggena balo bhunjatha bhojanam.
Ne so sankhatadhammanam kalam agghati solasim.

Which in translation means:-

'Month after month, a fool may eat his food from the tip of a blade of Kusa-grass; but his worth is not the sixteenth part of those who have comprehended the truth.

'Again, mark the close resemblance of the following two stanzas in the Uttaradhayana Sutra and Sutra-Kratanga with the verses of the Dhammapada:

1. Fight with yourself, why fight with external forces. He who conquers himself through himself will obtain happines."

   Uttaradhyana Sutra
   9,34 - 5

   Though one should conquer in battle thousands and thousands of men, yet he is the noblest victor who would conquer himself

   --Dhammapada (103)

2. 'All beigns hate pain, therefore one should not kill them. This is the quintessence of wisdom, not to kill anything.'

   - Sutrakratanga
   I, II, 9-10.

   'All tremble before punishment: all fear death. Comparing others with oneself, one should not slay, nor cause to slay'.

   - Dhammapada (129)

An important feature worthy of note here is that whereas there are a large number of references to Nigantha Nataputta or Mahavira in the Buddhist scriptures, there are hardly any references to the Buddha in the Jaina scriptures. The significant references to Mahavira and his teachings in the Buddhist scriptures are in the Digha Nikaya and Majjhima Nikaya. A brief discription of some of the Suttas is given below:-

Digha Nikaya

2. Samanaphala sutta	Ajatasatru, King of Magadha, describes his visit to and discussion with Mahavira and other religious teachers. Thereafter, the Buddha explains to him the advantage of being a Bhikkhu.

8. Kassapasihanada sutta	A dialogue with the naked ascetic Kassapa against self-mortification.
29. Pasadika sutta	During his visit to Pava, dispute among the Jains after the death of Mahavira is reported to the Buddha by Ananda and Chunda. The Buddha discourses on dispute and harmony.

Majjhima Nikaya

35. Culla-Saccaka sutta	A public discussion between the Buddha and Saccaka, a Jain, on the nature of five khandakas of the individual. Saccaka was defeated
56. Upali sutta	Story of the households Upali who is sent by Mahavira to argue with the Buddha but is converted.
58. Abhaya Rajakumara sutta	Story of Prince Abhaya who is sent by Mahavira to question the Buddha on the condemnation of Devadatta but is converted.
101. Devadaha sutta	Buddha gives an account of his discussion with some Niganthas who came to see him, and sharply criticises the view of Mahavira about extreme penances.
104. Samagama sutta	On being informed of the quarrel among the disciples of Mahavira after his death at Pava, Buddha explains four causes of dispute, four ways of handling such disputes, and six principles of harmony in the sangha.

Some other valuable references to the Jaina teachings in the Pali Nikayas are in the following suttas:

1. Samyutta Nikaya	Sankhadhammasutta, Acela-kassapasutta, Acelasutta, Sattajatilasutta, and Nanatit-thiyasutta.
2. Anguttara Nikaya	Tika-nipata (The Book of the Three) Tapodhammasutta, Vappasutta, and Lokayatika-sutta.
3. Khuddaka Nikaya	Udana (Sattajatilasutta), Sutta-Nipata (Dhammikasutta), Jataka (Mahabodhi), and the Dhammapada.

As is evident, the Pali Buddhist scriptures have contributed much to the historicity of Jainism. The absence of counter references to the Buddha in the Jaina scriptures could perhaps be attributed to their collection and codification about 1000 years after Mahavira and Buddha.

It was in the sixth century BC that the Buddha and Mahavira sanctified the soil of India and preached their doctrines. In the following centuries, Buddhism as a result of the missionary zeal of the Buddhist savants spread far and wide and became a world religion. On the other hand, Jainism has always remained confined to India.

The glorious epoch of Buddhism in India was the period from the third century BC to the seventh century AD. Thereafter, however, Buddhism began declining rapidly. And by the twelfth century, Buddhism had practically disappeared from India. So far as Jainism is concerned, reverse is the case. It could not find foothold and attract any sizable number of votaries during the ascendency of Buddhism. The first millenium, after Mahavira, is therefore known as the dark age of the Jaina history. Further, Buddhism was patronised by majority of the kings, princes and people of North India. In contrast, Jainism appears to have faired much better in South India, that is, the areas outside the influence of early Buddhism.

The middle or medieval period (from fifth century to the end of twelfth century) is the most important and eventful period in the Jaina history. During this

period, Jainism not only enjoyed royal patronage of considerable magnitude but also registered great achievements in art and literature. The Jaina Canon was written down in the beginning of the sixth century AD under the leadership of Devardhi at Vallabhi in Gujarat. In the following centuries, a number of non-canonical works and commentaries were also written by the Jain Acharyas. During this period, a number of Jain temples and monuments also came up, largely with royal patronage. Among them mention may be made of: Caves at Ellora, The Statue of Bahubali at Saravana Belgola in Karnataka, temples at Satranjaya, near Palitana and Girnar in Gujarat, and Dilwara Temple, Mount Abu, in Rajasthan.

Jainism began to decline from the fourteenth century onward. Unlike Buddhism, however, it managed to survive though its adherents were relegated to the position of an insignificant minority. The scholars differ on the question as to how Jainism survived while Buddhism declined in India.

According to the Author of Historia Religionism:

"The reasons for the different fates in India of the sister-religions are certainly many and various. Among them was the economic power which had always belonged to the Jainas, and the substantial immobility of doctrine through the centuries. Indian Buddhism lacked both these attributes. However, what decided the issue seems to have been the different organisation of the two communities. In contrast, to the Buddhists, the Jaina laity always felt themselves closely linked to their monks, whom they acknowledged as indispensable guides for the preservation of the faith necessary for salvation. Thus there was never lacking an active solidarity which enabled the Jainas to endure the greatest trials."

Mrs. Stevenson offers another plausible explanation for this phenomena. She says "The Character of Jainism was such as to enable it to throw out tantacles to help it in its hour of need. It had never, like Buddhism, cut itself off from the faith that surrounded it, for it had always employed Brahmins as its domestic chaplains, who presided at its birth rites, and often acted as officiants at its death and marriage ceremonies and temple worship. Then too, amongst its chief heroes, it has found niches for some of the favourites of the Hindu pantheon, Ram, Krishna and the like. So unlike the Buddhists, the

Jainas compromised with Hinduism. They not only adopted the domestic rites and rituals of the Hindus, they also adopted the Hindu rites of worship together with the Hindu gods and goddesses. Even they adopted the caste-system of Hinduism."

"In the field of literature," according to Winternitz,[5] more than the Buddhists, the Jainas were at pains to appropriate to themselves all the favourite popular themes from Brahamanical and general Indian literature, so as to be in a position thus to offer their adherents within the fold of their own religious community all that they could find elsewhere too". To quote only a few instances: Vimala Suri composed Rama Epic-- Padma Cariya 530 years after the nirvana of Mahavira. In 678 AD Ravisena wrote an extended version of Vimala Suri's Rama Epic. Later adaptations of the Rama legend are found in Uttara Purana and Hemachandra's Trisatisalaka Purusa Caritra-- also called Jaina Ramayana. Jainasena adapted Mahabharata to Jaina use in the Harivarmsa Purana which he wrote in 783 AD. In this Purana, not only the legends of Krishna and Balarama are told in Jaina setting but Gautama, the pupil of Mahavira, is made the narrator of the story. Further, in about 1200 AD Maladharin Devaprabha Suri wrote Pandva Carita. A Pandava Purana, also known as Jaina Mahabharata was written by Subhachandra in 1551 AD. We do not find such parallels in the Buddhist literature. Thus Jainism had a much stronger tendency than Buddhism to adapt itself to Hinduism. The Jainas themselves explain the close relations of their religion with Brahamanism "by asserting that their religion is the oldest of all religions and the religion of the Brahmins is merely a degenerate form of it". Further, as says H.H. Wison,[6] "They appear also to have adapted themselves to the prevailing form of Hinduism in different places; thus at Abu several Jain inscriptions commence with Invocations of Siva and in the Deccan an edict promulgated by Bukka Raya, of Vijayanagar, declares there is no real difference between the Jains and Vaisanavas. In some places, the same temples are resorted to by Jains and Ramanujiya Vaisanavas, and as observed by Colebrooke, a Jain on renouncing the heretical doctrines of his sect takes his place amongst the orthodox Hindus as a Kashatriya or Vaishya, which would not be the case with a convert, who has not already caste as a Hindu. In the South of India, indeed, the Jains preserve

the distinction of castes; in Upper India they profess to be of one caste, Vaishya".

According to another writer, "Jainism adopted a less active missionary career than Buddhism and the followers preferred more secluded sites as their chief centres of worship. It was the result of this seclusion that the Jainas did not incur the terrible wrath of the Brahamanas and as such resisted more successfully the stress of the Brahmanical revival and the Muhammadan persecution under which Buddhism in India ultimately collapsed". According to yet another writer: "the toleration extended to them (Jainas) by the Brahmanas, even though they were regarded as heretics, led large number of Buddhists to take refuge in their community in the days of persecution."

ANNEX

The Riddle of Dates and Places

According to a tradition, Gautama, the Buddha, was born in 624-623 BC and He attained Maha-parinirvana in 544-543 BC. Based on this tradition, completion of 2500 years of the Buddha Sasana, or the 2500th Buddha Jayanti, was celebrated with great reverence and gratitude by all the Buddhist countries, including India, in 1956. However, the historians are of the view that the Buddha was born in 563 BC and attained Maha-parinirvana in 483 BC. This date has been arrived at on the basis of the historical data available in regard to the consecration of Asoka, who, according to Dipavamsa (VI.I), ascended the throne after 218 years of Buddha's Maha-parinirvana. In support of this date, K.N. Upadhyaya says:[7] "We know that Asoka was preceded by his father Bindusara and grandfather Chandra Gupta. The former reigned for 28 years according to the Mahavamasa and the latter for 24 years according to both the Mahavamsa and the Dipavamsa. We also know that the consecration of Asoka was really performed after he had already reigned for four years. This means that his grandfather, Chandra Gupta must have ascended the throne 218-(4+28+24) = 162 years, after Buddha's death. Fortunately, the date of Chandra Gupta's accession to the throne can be ascertained with a considerable amount of certainty, for it

is related with the well-known historical fact of Alexander's invasion to India.....It is an established historical fact that Alexander the Great died on his way back at Babylon in 323 BC after which Chandra Gupta fought against the Nanda-King and ascended the throne. Chandra Gupta's accession is, therefore, to be accepted to have taken place in the year 321 BC (or allowing margin for mistakes, within two years of this date). So we arrive at the year (321 + 162) = 483 BC which seems to be more dependable a date of Buddha's death than any other."

A significant aspect to be noted here is that there is a gap of 60 years between the two Birth and Maha-parinirvana dates of the Buddha, that is, 623 BC and 563 BC (623-563 = 60); and 543 BC and 483 BC (543-483=60). In spite of laborious efforts, the scholars have not been able to find a satisfactory explanation for this gap of 60 years.

Like the date of the Buddha, the date of Mahavira has also been a subject of much controversy among the scholars. In fact, in the case of Mahavira, there are at least four sets of dates. The Jains have now generally adopted 599 BC as the year of Mahavira's birth and 527 BC as the year of His Nirvana.[8] Another set of dates for the birth and Nirvana of Mahavira is 539 BC -- 467 BC. Yet another two sets of dates are: 618 BC - 546 BC and 549 BC - 477 BC.

As will be noticed, in the case of first two sets of dates generally quoted for Mahavira, there is a gap of 60 years between the two Birth and Nirvana dates, i.e. 599 BC and 539 BC; 527 BC and 467 BC respectively. Thus in respect of both the Buddha and Mahavira, there is a missing link of 60 years. Somewhere something is missing which we are unable to determine with our present knowledge.

Notwithstanding this riddle of traditions and dates, certain facts are very clear and are accepted as true by most of the historians. These are:

(1) The Buddha and Mahavira were contemporaries;
(2) Mahavira was senior to the Buddha;
(3) Mahavira lived for 72 years and the Buddha for 80 years; and
(4) Mahavira attained Nirvana during the life time of the Buddha.

From the dates, we now turn to the riddle of the holy places. In the life of the Buddha, four events are the most important. His birth, Enlightenment, First Sermon, and Maha-parinirvana. The sacred sites where these events took place have since been identified and stand fully confirmed by the literary as well as archaeological evidence. These sites are: Lumbini, the birth place of the Buddha, in Nepal, just 10 km from the Indo-Nepalese border touching district Basti of Uttar Pradesh; Bodh Gaya, the site of His Enlightenment, 12 km south of the city of Gaya in Bihar; Sarnath, the site of First Sermon, ten km from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh; and Kushinagar, the site of Buddha's Maha-parinirvana, 55 km from Gorakhpur, in District Deoria, Uttar Pradesh.

Turning to Mahavira, we find that there are fundamental differences between tradition and history in respect of the sites associated with Him. The historians now generally agree that Mahavira was born at Kundapura, a suburb of Vaisali, 37 km from Muzaffarpur and 55 km from Patna in Bihar. Since long, however, the Jains have looked upon Kundalpura, near Nalanda in Bihar, as the birth place of Mahavira. There is yet another birth place of Mahavira. The Svetambaras consider Ksatriyakunda, near Lacchuvada (Distt. Monghyr) in Bihar as the birth place of Mahavira. Both Kundalapura and Lacchuvada have been for centuries places of pilgrimage for the Jains whereas the actual birth place at Vaisali is yet in the making of a holy shrine.

Mahavira is said to have attained Omniscience on the bank of Rjukula or Rjuvaluka in the vicinity of Jrmbhikagramma or Jambhiya in Bihar. This river and the village have not been conclusively identified so far.

According to tradition, Mahavira preached His First Sermon at Rajagriha on the mount Vipulacala on the first day of the black half of the month of Sravana. Only in recent times, a Vira-Sasana Memorial has been erected there.

Mahavira pre-deceased the Buddha. He is said to have attained Nirvana at the age of 72, at Pavapura on the fourteenth day of the black half of the month of Kartika. On the authority of Buddhist texts like Digha-- Nikaya, the historians are now of the view that Mahavira attained Nirvana at Pava near Kushinagar where Lord Buddha on His way to Kushinara from Vaisali had taken a meal and fallen ill. Ancient Pava has now been identified with

the modern village Papura (Sathiyava Fajilnagar) about 20 km from Kushinagar in Deoria District of U.P. But the Jains have traditionally accepted Pawapuri, 80 km east of Patna on Patna-Ranchi Road in Bihar as the site of the Nirvana of Mahavira.

So unlike Buddhist shrines which are historically well established, the Jaina shrines are shrouded in mystery. There are three birth places and two Nirvana sites in the case of Mahavira. The site of His enlightenment is not yet well established, and the site of His first sermon at Rajagriha is not so well-known.

Besides the four sacred Buddhist shrines, namely Lumbini, Bodh Gaya, Sarnath and Kushinara-- the scenes of Birth, Enlightenment, First Sermon and Maha-parinirvana of the Buddha, another four Buddhist shrines are Sravasti, Sankasya, Rajagriha and Vaisali: the places sanctified by the Buddha and being the scenes of the four principal miracles that the Buddha is said to have performed.

Out of these eight sacred Buddhist shrines, at least four are associated with Jainism also. These are: Sarnath, Sravasti, Vaisali and Rajagriha.

Sarnath, the scene of Buddha's First Preaching, has a Jaina temple erected in 1824 to commemorate the penances of the eleventh Jain Tirthankara Sreyamsanatha.

Sravasti, where the Buddha spent 25 rainy seasons and performed the Great Miracle of creating a huge array of representations of Himself, seated and standing on lotuses and causing fire and water to emanate from His body, is also hallowed as the birth-place of Sambhavanatha, the third Jaina Tirthankara. There is an ancient Sobhnatha temple in the present day Sravasti (Saheth Maheth), 21 km from Balrampur in U.P.

At Vaisali, where a monkey had offered honey to the Buddha, and the Second Buddhist Council was held, has since been recognised as the real birth-place of Mahavira.

Rajagriha (Rajgir) where the Buddha had tamed a mad elephant and delivered some important sermons; and where the First Buddhist Council was held, is also said to be the site of Mahavira's First Preaching.

8

BUDDHISM AND SIKHISM

Sikhism is younger to Buddhism by over 2000 years as Guru Nanak, its founder, was born in 1469 AD whereas Lord Buddha lived in the sixth century BC. In spite of that, and the fact that Sikhism arose at a time when almost all traces of Buddhism had disappeared from India, the religion of the Buddha can be said to have left its mark on the Sikh religion. To quote only a few instances:

In the Adi Granth, the holy book of the Sikhs, there is a reference to Lord Buddha at more than one place, though sometimes He is grouped with the Siddhas and Yogis for praising and eulogising God as in the following hymns:

1. Sivas speak of Him, Siddhas speak of Him,
   The Buddhas He has created, proclaim Him.[1]

2. On the top of them
   How many adepts,
   Buddhas and Yogis are there.
   His worshippers are
   numberless, saith Nanak.[2]

The Buddha did not recommend the worship of God and a Buddhist does not bother about Him. The Sikhs, however, lean heavily on God. Sikhism, therefore, like all other theistic religions differs in theory from Buddhism. But the influence of Buddhism on its practical aspect is visible in many ways. Mark what Sher Singh says[3]

in 'Philosophy of Sikhism' regarding the influence of the Buddha and Buddhism on the Sikh religion. "From other Hindu systems, Sikhism does not so much differ in theory as in practice, but in the case of Buddhism, the opposite is true. There is no borrowing in theory but the influence is visible in some practical aspects. Buddha tried to abolish caste and his idea of brotherhood becomes important theme with Nanak. Purity of heart and sincerety in our dealings with mankind were the essence of religion for Nanak. These virtues were the first to be emphasized by Buddha. No sanctity of any particular language is the third common element in the teachings of the two prophets. Buddha preached in the spoken language of the people and was the first Indian prophet to become a missionary. In these respects Nanak very closely resembles Buddha".

When the Buddha traversed and sanctified the soil of India, the self indulgent people lived the lives of luxury and sin, and the ascetics practised self-mortification in various ways. The Buddha declared both these ways as futile and unworthy of attaining Nirvana. He preached the Middle Path that is avoidance of the two extremes--the life of luxury and passion and the life of self-torture through penance. The founder of Sikhism preached the essence of the middle path in another sense. He exhorted his disciples to avoid the extremes of Hinduism and Islam, the two religions prevalent in the Punjab in those days. Lord Buddha denied the authority and sanctity of the Vedas, denounced the caste system, sacrifices and rituals, and exhorted His followers to lead a simple and moral life. He emphasized the need of self-less service to the humanity and gave the clarion call of Bahujana Hitaye, Bahujana Sukhaye (welfare and well-being of the many). The Sikh Gurus almost preached literally these Buddhistic ideas. In the Rahtnama or Book of Guidance, Gobind Singh the tenth and last Guru, exhorts the Sikhs not to follow the doctrines of the Vedas, Puranas and Quran. He further tells them not to perform Shradhas or ceremonies of the anniversaries of the dead. Regarding caste, the Guru says, 'there must be no caste and all must be equal, no man greather than the other'. The ideal of service is also equally emphasized in Sikhism.

The Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, commonly known as Triple-Gem (Tri-Ratana) are the three basic principles of Buddhism. When the Buddhists take the

Triple Refuge (Tri-Sarana) it means that they take refuge in the Buddha (Founder, Teacher or Guru), His Word and the Assembly of the venerable monks (both past and present). Almost the same idea of Tri-Sarana is reflected in the Sikh formula of having faith in the Guru, the Word and the Sangat. The only difference in the Triple gem of the Sikhs is that the Bhikkhu Sangha is replaced here by the congregation of the lay devotees but the pattern remains the same.

Every lay Buddhist is expected to lead his life in accordance with the Five Precepts (Pancha Sila) enunciated by the Buddha. These precepts are vows to abstain from killing, stealing, debauchery, telling lies and taking intoxicating drinks and drugs. These precepts are, therefore, necessary ingredient of a Buddhist's daily life. The Sikhs too have vows to take, but in their case these are external signs of the body. The Sikhs are enjoined to wear the five K's, viz. the Kesh (long hair), Kachha (short breeches), the Kara (iron bangle), the Kirpan (sword) and the Kangha (comb). Though the five Precepts and the five K's differ from each other, the fact remains that the 'five vows' are important in both the religions. The figure of five is dear to the Buddhists and the Sikhs alike for another reason also. Lord Buddha delivered His First Sermon at Sarnath before five recluses, Bhikkhus. The last Guru of the Sikhs too, first of all, initiated five Sikhs, known as the 'Five Beloved' (Punj Piyare) when he transformed the peaceful followers of Nanak into a militant class and gave them the name of Khalsa.

The Four Noble Truths expounded by the Buddha lay emphasis on suffering (Dukkha). Guru Nanak also says, 'the entire world is suffering' (Nanak, Dukhiya Sab Sansar). In Sikhism, however, the end of misery and suffering has been made dependent on the Name (Nam) and Grace of God, and not on cessation of worldly passion as is the case in Buddhism.

The word 'Nirvana' (Pali: Nibbana) was first of all used by the Enlightened One and denotes highest bliss or a state of everlasting peace. The attainment of 'Nirvana' means extinction of lust, hate, and delusion which results in cessation of misery and suffering. In Sikhism also, the word 'Nirvana' is used with almost the same import and meaning. Here it means realisation of God which, in other words means ceassation of wordly misery and suffering. Further, it is significant that Teg Bahadur,

the ninth Guru, while giving the definition of 'Nirvana' refers to the Buddha and says that it is the hardest thing to achieve: "And that seeks the blissful Nirvana, Nanak, That seeking is the hardest of all games:

Only the rare Enlightened Ones master[4] it."

There are four principal centres of pilgrimage for the Buddhists. These are: Lumbini, the Birth place of the Buddha; Bodh Gaya, the seat of His Enlightenment; Sarnath, the place where He delivered His First Sermon; and Kusinara, the site of His Mahaparinirvana. Every year, lakhs of devout Buddhists from all over the world visit these four sacred shrines. The Sikhs too have four important pilgrim centres which are also known as four Takhats or Thrones of Panthic Authority.[5] These are: Amritsar, where Guru Arjun Dev compiled the Adi-granth; Patna (Bihar), the birth place of Guru Gobind Singh; Anandpur, where the Khalsa was born; and Nander (Andhra) where Guru Gobind Singh breathed his last. As is evident, the selection of the four Sikh shrines almost follows the Buddhist pattern.

In the hey day of Buddhism, the Viharas were the places where not only monks but lay people also could get food and shelter, whenever in need. The system of 'Guru Ka Langar' food for every body in vogue in the Gurudwaras seems to have been adopted by the Sikh Gurus by taking cue from the Buddhist tradition prevalent amongst some Yogis. Further, the Gurus seem to have constructed the Golden Temple, Amritsar with four gates on the pattern of the Buddhist Viharas. Prior to the rise of Buddhism, the temples had only one gate. The Buddhists introduced the practice of four gates with a view to emphasize equality, i.e. the Viharas were open to all.

The religion of the Buddha is associated with Sikhism in another way also. One of the famous Sikh shrines is Panja Sahib, near Hasan Abdal in Cambellpur District Pakistan. At the time of Guru Nanak, it was known as the spring of Baba Wali. When Nanak visited that place, it is said, Wali Shah hurled a large rock at him. The Guru turned it aside with his hand. The marks of the five fingers of Nanak on the rock gave it the name of Panja Sahib. The spring of Baba Wali at Panja Sahib has since been identified as the tank of Nagaraja Elapatra who was a Bhikkhu at the time of Kashyapa Buddha. Hiuen Tsang, who visited this place in the seventh century, that is, about 800 years before Guru Nanak and about

400 years before the advent of Islam in the Punjab has given an interesting account of this tank. He says:[6]

"North-West of the capital about 70 li is the tank of the Nagaraja Elapatra (1-lo-po-to-lo); it is about 100 paces round the waters are pure and sweet; lotus flowers of various colours, which reflect different tints in their common beauty (garnish the surface); this Naga was a Bhikshu who anciently, in the time of Kashyapa Buddha, destroyed an Elapatra tree. Hence, at the present time, when the people of that country ask for rain or fine weather, they must go with the Sramanas to the side of the tank, and then cracking their fingers (or, in a moment), after praying for the desired object, they obtain it."

The Buddhist heritage has passed on to the Sikhs in another form also. The Sikhs consider the tank in the Golden Temple, Amritsar as the most sacred. This tank was a small lake when Ram Das, the Fourth Guru per chance discovered it. He acclaimed it Amritsar, the tank of nectar. This tank is said to be Buddhistic in origin. It has since been identified as the famous lake of Padmasambhava. St. Padamasambhava hailed from the Swat Valley and was a powerful apostle of Tantrism. He flourished in the eighth century and did a lot to propagate Buddhism in Tibet where he went in 747 AD. The Tibetans consider him as their Guru and regard him next only to Buddha. The name Padmasambhava means the Lotus born. According to a Tibetan tradition,[7] Padmasambhava was found by the King Indra-bodhi or Indrabhuti of Udyana or Urgyan on the petals of a lotus flower in this lake.

In olden days, the pilgrims from Tibet used to visit this lake while on pilgrimage to other Buddhist shrines in the Punjab. In this connection we reproduce below what the famous Italian scholar, G. Tucci, has said[8] about the itinerary of the Tibetan pilgrims who came to India in the thirteenth cetury:

"At the time of stag Ts' an rasa pa there was a regular intercouse between Jalandhra and Tibet as there is even now. There is hardly any doubt that this was chiefly due to the travels of Tibetan pilgrims of the r Dsogs C'en and specially bka rgyad pa sects who used to visit the sacred places of Buddhist tradition. After r God Ts' an pa, their number must have considerably increased; to-day there is a regular intercourse along the routes and the tracks of Western Tibet.

From there, they descend to the holy tirthas of the Buddhist tradition, to Amritsar where the tank of the Golden Temple is believed to be the lake of Padmasambhava, to Bodh Goya, to Sarnath."

As is evident from the foregoing, there are not only a number of similarities between Buddhism and Sikhism but the Buddhist heritage has also passed on to Sikhism in more than one form.

9

BUDDHISM : A NATIONAL SYMBOL

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Buddhism was unknown in India, the land of its birth, development and highest achievements. There were no shrines, no literature and no Buddhists. Even the name of the Buddha had vanished from the memory of the Indians. Similar was the fate of Asoka and other Buddhist kings, saints and scholars who had made immense contribution to Indian culture, its art and literature. A new light dawned on the dark horizon when the curious British officers started bringing to light the Buddhist heritage hidden under the dust and debris. The Asokan Pillars were naturally the first objects to catch their eyes. The romantic story of the archaeological discoveries began from the Capital of India when Padre Tieffenthaler discovered in 1750 the Delhi-Meerut Pillar on the Delhi Ridge. In the same year, the Allahabad-- Kosam (Kausambi) Pillar at Allahabad was discovered. This was followed by the discovery of the Lauriya-Araraj Pillar in Bihar in 1784. In 1785, the Delhi-Topra Pillar at Ferozshah Kotla, Delhi was discovered by Captain Polier. He presented some drawings of its inscriptions to Sir William Jones who had founded in Calcutta in 1784 the Asiatic Society of Bengal to collect, decipher and interpret the archaeological and other specimens discovered by its members.

By 1836, a number of Rock and Pillar inscriptions had been discovered in various parts of India. But no body knew either their contents or the name of their creator. No Indian scholar was competent enough to

decipher the most ancient inscriptions of India which were found not only on the rocks and pillars but on some monuments as well. In 1837, James Prinsep, a high official of the Indian Mint, Calcutta, and Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, succeeded, after several years of assiduous study and hard work, in deciphering the inscriptions. In July, 1837, he published[1] facsimiles, phonetic transcriptions and English translation of the then known Pillar inscriptions. In 1838, Prinsep deciphered[2] and published translation of the Girnar Rock inscription (discovered by Major James Tod in 1822) and the Dhauli Rock inscription (discovered by Captain M. Kottoe in 1837). He also made a comparative study of both the Rock inscriptions and found them indentical in language and contents.

The opening words of all the Pillar and Rock Edicts were, 'Thus spake the beloved of gods, King Piyadasi'. Who was king Piyadasi still remained a mystery. Luckily, about the same time, George Turnour translated and published in English the Mahavamsa, a Pali chronicle of Sri Lanka. The occurrence of the word 'Piyadasi' in the Mahavamsa helped James Prinsep in identifying King Piyadasi as the great Buddhist Emperor Asoka. The deciphering of the Asokan lipi and the indentification of Asoka was an epoch-making event. It enriched the history of India and of Buddhism to such an extent that all history books had to be re-written.

The advent of Sir Alexander Cunningham, who was appointed as the first Director General of Archaeological Survey of India in 1861, proved a boon for the Indian Archaeology in general and Buddhism in particular. He was undoubtedly the greatest pioneer archaeologist and hero of the Buddhist renaissance in India. The first important discovery to be made by him was at Sanchi. Though the monuments at Sanchi were discovered as early as 1818 but it was in 1851 that the Great Stupa was opened by Cunningham. From inside this Stupa he discovered the sacred relics of the two chief disciples of the Buddha, namely, Sariputta and Moggallana. These sacred relics were taken to London and kept there in safe custody till their return to India a century later. Cunningham's publication 'Bhilsa Topes or Buddhist Monuments of Central India' (1854) is a comprehensive study of the Sanchi shrines.

Cunningham's zeal and interest in the archaeological material opened a new vista in the study of ancient

monuments. As luck would have it, a French scholar, M. Stanisla Julien, had in the meanwhile published a translation of the travel accounts of Hiuen Tsang, the famous Chinese pilgrim who was in India from AD 629-644. Following the footsteps of Hiuen Tsang, Cunningham went round; visited all the sites described by the Chinese pilgrim; and with the greatest persevering labour and enterprise succeeded in identifying most of the Buddhist shrines. In his monumental work 'Ancient Geography of India, Part I, the Buddhist Period,' Cunningham recapitulated the glorious history of the Buddhist remains and monuments scattered all over the country. In 1870, he excavated the vicinity of the Maha Bodhi Temple, and published his conclusions under the title 'Maha Bodhi or the Great Buddhist Temple at Buddha Gaya'. In 1973-74, Cunningham excavated the Mahastupa of Bharhut and rescued the finest Buddhist art from further obvilion. His publication 'Stupa of Bharhut' throws a flood of light on this most ancient Buddhist shrine in Central India. The Asokan inscriptions also received Cunningham's proper attention as it was he who in 1877 published the text and translation of all the then known inscriptions in one volume.

The re-discovery of the Buddhist monuments as well as the Buddhist literature in Pali and Sanskrit, preserved in original or in translation, in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Tibet and China created a new awakening amongst the people of India but no body had as yet thought of the Buddhist revival in India. In 1885, Sir Edwin Arnold, the world famous poet and author of the 'Light of Asia' visited Bodh Gaya and was appalled to see the deplorable condition of the most sacred shrine of the Buddhists. He later wrote a number of articles in the 'Telegraph', of which he was the editor, and drew attention of the Buddhists to the pitiable condition of the Maha Bodhi Temple, and urged them to save it from further desecration. Inspired by Sir Edwin Arnold's articles, Dharmapala, a young Sinhala Buddhist, visited Sarnath and Bodh Gaya in January 1891 to see for himself the condition of the Buddhist shrines. He was shocked to see the horrible condition of the most sacred shrines. At Bodh Gaya, he was visibly moved as under the Mahant's charge the Maha Bodhi Temple was being shamefully neglected and desecrated. He, therefore, resolved to restore the sacred shrines to their former glory and to make them living

centres of Buddhism. With this object in view, he established the Maha Bodhi Society of India on 31 May 1891. Soon thereafter, Anagarika Dharmapala installed four Buddhist monks from Sri Lanka in the Burmese Rest House at Bodh Gaya to look after the Maha Bodhi Temple. Thus began the Buddhist revival movement in India.

The revival movement gained momentum when some sons of the soil became Buddhist monks and revived the ancient glory of the Buddhist Sangha. The first Hindu to become a Buddhist Monk in modern times was Mahavir Swami. He became a Bhikkhu in Sri Lanka in 1890 and later made Kushinagar the centre of his activities. Mahavir Swami was followed by Venerable Dharmananda Kosambi (1902), Ven. Bodhananda (1914), Bhadant Anand Kausalayayan (1928), Mahapandit Rahul Sankritiyayan (1930), and Ven. Jagdish Kashyap (1934). The construction of modern Buddhist Temples, such as, Sri Dharmarajika Vihara, Calcutta in 1920; Buddha Vihara at Risaldar Park, Lucknow in 1925; the Mulagandhakuti Vihara, Sarnath in 1931 and Buddha Vihara, New Delhi in 1939 gave further impetus to the revival movement.

By the time India gained Independence in 1947, the great Buddhist heritage, its art and literature were well-known in the country. When the Constituent Assembly was busy in drafting a Constitution for free India, the question of the National Flag and the National Emblem baffled the founding fathers. Their eyes ultimately turned towards the Buddhist heritage which represented the glorious past of India. Thanks to the wisdom of the Constituent Assembly, the Buddhist Wheel of Law (Dharmachakra) and the Lion-Capital of the Asokan Pillar at Sarnath were adopted the National symbols of free India. The three inspiring personalities behind the adoption of these symbols of the Buddhist culture as 'National Symbols' were: Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of the Constituent Assembly, who hailed from Bihar, the land of Buddha's Enlightenment; Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister, a great admirer of the Buddha and Asoka; and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Chairman of the Committee which drafted the Constitution, who was to change the course of history a few years later by leading millions of his followers to the fold of Buddhism.

On 22 July, 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru moved the following Resolution[3] in the Constituent Assembly:

Mr. President, it is my proud privilege to move the following Resolution:

> "Resolved that the National Flag of India shall be horizontal tricolour of deep saffron (Kesari), white and dark green in equal proportion. In the centre of the white band, there shall be a Wheel in navy blue to represent the Charkha. The design of the Wheel shall be that of the Wheel (Chakra) which appears on the abacus of the Sarnath Lion Capital of Asoka. The diameter of the Wheel shall be approximate to the width of the white band. The ratio of the width to the length of the Flag shall ordinarily be 2.3".

This Resolution, Sir, is in simple language, in slightly technical language and there is no glow or warmth in the words that I have read. Yet I am sure that many in this House will feel that glow and warmth which I feel at the present moment far behind this Resolution and the Flag which I have the honour to present to this House for adoption lies history, the concentrated history of a short span in a nation's existence. Nevertheless, sometimes in a brief period we pass through the track of centuries. It is not so much the mere act of living that counts but what one does in this brief life that in ours; it is not so much the mere existence of a nation that counts but what the nation does during the various periods of its existence; and I do venture to claim that in the past quarter of a century or so India has lived and acted in a concentrated way and the emotions which have filled the people of India represent not merely a brief spell of years but something infinitely more."

Nehru further said:

"I began by saying that it is my proud privilege to be ordered to move this Resolution. Now, Sir, may I say a few words about this particular Flag? It will be seen that there is a slight variation from the one many of us have used during these past years. The colours are the same, a deep saffron, a white and a dark green. In the white previously there was the Charkha which symbolised the common man in India, which symbolised the masses of the people, which symbolised their industry and which came to us from the message which Mahatma Gandhi delivered. Now this particular Charkha symbol has been slightly varied in this Flag, not taken away

at all. Why then has this been varied? Normally speaking, the symbol on one side of the Flag should be exactly the same as on the other side. Otherwise, there is a difficulty which goes against the rules. Now, the Charkha, as it appeared previously on this Flag, had the wheel on one side and the spindle on the other. If you see the other side of the Flag, the spindle comes the other way and the wheel comes this way; if it does not do so, it is not proportionate, because the wheel must be towards the pole, not towards the end of the Flag. There was this practical difficulty. Therefore, after considerable thought we were of course convinced that this great symbol which had enthused people should continue but that it should continue in a slightly different form, that the wheel should be there, not the rest of the Charkha, that is the spindle and the string which created this confusion, that the essential part of the Charkha should be there, that is the wheel. But what type of wheel should we have? Our minds went back to many wheels but notably one famous wheel, which had appeared in many places and which all of us have seen, the one at the top of the capital of the Asoka column and in many other places. That wheel is a symbol of India's ancient culture, it is a symbol of the many things that India had stood for through the ages. So we thought that this Chakra emblem should be there, and that wheel appears."

Nehru added:

"For my part, I am exceedingly happy that in this sense indirectly we have associated with this Flag of ours not only this emblem but in a sense the name of Asoka, one of the most magnificent names not only in India's history but in world history. It is well that at this moment of strife, conflict and intolerence, our minds should go back towards what India stood for in the ancient days."

The National Flag Resolution having been passed unanimously by the Constituent Assembly, the Dharmachakra symbolising the Dhamma or Law of the Buddha, became on 15 August 1947 the symbol of freedom, prosperity and happiness for the people of India.

The Lion Capital of Asoka, which has been adopted as the National Insignia, also symbolises Buddhism. The four lions facing four directions stand for the roaring form of Buddha (Sakyasimha) preaching in all the four directions.

The founding fathers also accepted the concept of a Welfare State preached and practised by Asoka, "There is verily no duty which is more important to me", says Asoka, "than promoting the welfare of all men". His sole desire was to make people happy in all respects. He, therefore adopted the maxim of 'bahujana-hitaya, bahujana-sukhaya' or 'for the gain of the many, for the welfare of the many' in the affairs of the state. Though Asoka was a devout Buddhist yet his administration was based on secular ideals. He patronised Buddhism but never persecuted other creeds. On the contrary, he gave them grants. In fact his policy "was marked by utter elimination of aggressive nationalism on the political level and fanaticism on the religious plane. Even after making Buddhism the State Religion, Asoka was no bedmate with the darker forces of bigotry and religious animosity".

Modern India has adopted the Democratic form of Government, and democratic way of life. In India, the concept of democracy too originated with the Buddhists. The Sangha founded by the Buddha was based on democratic principles and worked like modern Parliament. Highlighting this aspect, Jawaharlal Nehru quotes the following observations of Lord Zetland in 'Discovery of India[4]':

"And it may come as a surprise to many to learn that in the Assemblies of the Buddhists in India two thousand or more years ago are to be found the rudiments of our parliamentary system practice of the present day. The dignity of the Assembly was preserved by the appointment of a special officer-- the embryo of 'Mr Speaker' in the House of Commons. A second officer was appointed to see that a quorum was secured-- the Prototype of the parliamentary Chief Whip in our own system. If discussion disclosed a difference of opinion the matter was decided by the vote of the majority, the voting being by ballot".

Expressing similar views in the Constituent Assembly on 17 November, 1949, Dr. Ambedkar, the Chief Architect of India's Constitution, said,[5] "On the 26th of January 1950, India would be a democratic country in the sense that India from that day would have a government of the people, by the people and for the people,.....It is not that India did not know what is Democracy. There was a time when India was studded with Republics and where there were monarchies, they were either elected

or limited. They were never absolute. It is not that India did not know Parliaments or Parliamentary procedure. A study of the Buddhist Bikhshu Sanghas discloses that not only there were Parliaments but the Sanghas knew and observed all the rules of Parliamentary procedure known to modern times. They had rules regarding Motions, Resolutions, Quorum, Whip, Counting of Votes, Voting by Ballot, Censure Motion, Regularisation, Res Judicata etc."

In the Buddhist Sangha, the 'Speaker' was called 'Asana-prajnapaka'. The motion (Jnapti) was put before the House thrice. If all remained silent, it was considered as passed unanimously. In the case of difference of opinion, the matter was settled by 'Yebhuyyasika' i.e. the vote of the majority. The voting ticket or ballot was called 'Salaka'. The officials who collected Salakas were called 'Salaka-gahapakas'. Thus the regulation of the debate in the Sangha was of a highly developed order and was truly democratic.

On 26 January 1950, India became a Sovereign Democratic Republic, securing to all its citizens, Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. On that day, the Viceroy House became the seat of the President of India. The magnificent Rashtrapati Bhavan, as it is now known, has 340 rooms, 227 columns, 35 loggias and a mile and a half of corridor. In the Durbar Hall where the imperial durbars were held, during the British rule with the Viceroy seated in the silver coronation chair, now stands a tall meditative Buddha as if to bless the rulers of modern India. The Durbar Hall is used by the President for investiture ceremonies and the giving away of State awards. Next to it is the Ashoka Hall, named after the Emperor Asoka. It was the Viceroy's ballroom. Today, the new ministers take their solemon oaths in this hall. Foreign Ambassadors also present their credentials to the President of India in this hall. The famous Bull capital of the Asokan Pillar at Rampurva in Bihar can be seen just in front of the entrance to the Ashoka Hall. The top of the 180 feet high central dome of Rashtrapati Bhavan, on which flies the National Flag, also resembles closely the Sanchi Stupa.

After Independence, the question of having a national era also came to be considered. For this purpose, the Calendar Reforms Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. Meghnath Saha was appointed. On the recommendations of this Committee, the Government of India adopted the Saka Era started by Kanishka, another Buddhist Emperor, who ascended the throne in AD 78 and ruled over a major part of North India till AD 101. The era started by Kanishka came to be known as Saka Era as it was for a long time used by the Saka Satraps. The Saka Era was introduced as the National Era on 22nd March 1957 corresponding to the Ist Chaitra 1879. The Saka year, like the Gregorian one, has 365 days normally, and 366 days in a leap year. Normally, the month of Chaitra is of 30 days, and in the leap years it has 31 days. The months of Vaisakha, Jaistha, Asadha, Sravana and Bhadra have 31 days and the remaining six months, namely, Asvina, Kartika, Agrahayana, Pausa, Magha and Phalguna are of 30 days each.

The key-note of India's foreign policy formulated by Jawaharlal Nehru, the builder of modern India, are the Five Principles of Co-existence (Panch-Sheel). In formulating these principles, Nehru was inspired by the policy of peaceful co-existence followed by Asoka, and the Five Precepts (Panca-Sila)-- the minimum moral obligations of a lay Buddhist-- laid down by the Buddha. The Five Principles, formulated by Nehru and confirmed by the Bandung Conference of Asian Nations held in April 1955, are:

(1) Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
(2) Non-aggression.
(3) Non-interference in each other's internal affairs.
(4) Equality and mutual benefit.
(5) Peaceful co-existence.

The story of Indian art is the story of Buddhist art. In fact, the Buddhists were the pioneers in all forms of art. Of all the Buddhist monuments in India, the Ajanta Caves are the most famous. Hewn from the living rock, richly sculptured and with beautiful paintings on the walls, pillars and ceilings of some of the caves, they are the best remains of ancient Indian art. No wonder, they attract the largest number of tourists from all over the world. Significantly enough, an elephant with a lotus in his trunk from an Ajanta fresco has been adopted as its symbol by the Department of Tourism of the Government of India.

Whether in art or architecture, the story of ancient India begins with the Buddhists. The Buddhist monuments fall under three main heads-- stupas, chaitya halls and rock-cut caves. These have been discovered in abundance throughout the country and are a source of inspiration to the modern architects. In particular, the Sanchi gateway and the Ajanta window have been adopted as patterns in many modern buildings. One such building is the prestigious Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi, the main gate of which is a modern version of the Ajanta Window.

The first important event in the post-Independence era which focussed the attention of Indian masses on the virtues of the Buddha--Dhamma was the return and restoration of the sacred relics of the two chief disciples of the Buddha, namely, Sariputta and Moggallana at their original resting place, Sanchi. These relics were discovered by Allexander Cunningham in 1851 from the Great Stupa at Sanchi and were taken to London where they were kept in safe custody in the Victoria and Albert Museum. On the request of the Maha Bodhi Society of India, these relics were returned to India by the British Government on February 24, 1947. As per the arrangement, the relics were first taken to Sri Lanka by Daya Hewavitarne, a nephew of Anagarika Dharmapada, who had taken their possession from the said Museum on behalf of the Maha Bodhi Society of India. For over one and half year, the sacred relics were worshipped by the people of Sri Lanka before their onward journey to India. The sacred relics of Sariputta and Moggallana landed on the Indian soil, after about a century of their journey to London, on January 13, 1949[6] and were welcomed on board H.M.I.S. Tir by Dr. Kailash Nath Katju, Governor of West Bengal. After removing the relics from the ship, the relics were taken in a colourful procession to the government House (Raj Niwas) where they were temporarily installed in the Throne Room.

The relics of Sariputta and Moggallana were handed over to the Maha Bodhi Society of India by Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, at a public function held at Culcutta Maidan on 14 January, 1949. The public meeting which was attended by over half a million people representing different nationalities, was presided over by Dr. K.N. Katju, Governor of West Bengal. Speaking at the historic ceremony, Jawaharlal Nehru said:[7] "I have come here on behalf of the Government of India

to welcome you and to receive these relics of two great sons of India who lived nearly 2500 years ago. It is a privilege to me and to the Government I represent to be associated with this occasion and in my mind there is something much greater than this occasion. There is a succession of great men passing in my mind from that day when Buddha flourished in this ancient land and spread the light of His Wisdom in this country and other countries and later when again and again that message which He gave was repeated."

Turning to the representatives of the neighbouring Buddhist countries, Jawaharlal Nehru said: "Many of you have come from countries round about India and even farther away. I welcome you here. For you too, if I may say so, it is a home-coming. We are celebrating the home-coming of these relics which had gone away 100 years ago, the home-coming of these great truths again. We celebrate many hom-comings today. It is also the home-coming of many people from far-off lands who come here in India looking at it almost as a homeland, if I may say so. In the old days when the message of Buddha went out of our land, pilgrims from other countries came to our country and pilgrims from this land went to other countries. There was a regular coming and going and this bond kept us together. This was a bond of the spirit and without any formal political attachement we were tied with a silken bond. Now, after all, this function today again brings back those ties. Let us hope that not only we but others also will live together in peace and we shall have no conflict. If there is any conflict we shall resolve it with peace and goodwill in our heart".

Dr. K.N. Katju, Governor of West Bengal, who presided over the function, in the course of his speech said:[8] "We are celebrating today the home-coming of two of the greatest men born in this ancient land of ours. These two great disciples of Gautama Buddha, the Enlightened One, were considered even by Him as the best expounders and interpreters of the excellent doctrine which He was preaching for the redemption of mankind. The names of Sariputta and Moggallana are interwined with the names of the Blessed One and they have for countless generations in many countries brought solace and understanding. One was the embodiment of humility, gentleness and patience, patience which passeth all under-

standing, and the other, Moggallana, was keen of intellect, sharp of tongue and reputed to possess supernormal powers. Both of them were disciples whom the Blessed One greatly loved and we are welcoming them back home again. These sacred relics were evidently enshrined by directions of Maharaja Asoka in many places in India, but as the noble doctrine of the Blessed One ceased to animate our life, so did we lost all knowledge even of the holy places associated with the name of the Blessed One and His disciples."

Continuing Dr. Katju said, "It is not a mere coincidence that with the growth of our national consciousness has come to us in larger and larger measure consciousness also of the excellence of the doctrine preached in India 2500 years ago, and along that consciousness we have also discovered as if by a miracle many of our holy treasures. In the ruins of a broken stupa we discovered 90 years ago these holy ashes. They were taken away to England and it is not striking that when our beloved Bhartavarsha has again become free and has adopted the symbol of the Wheel of Law turned for the first time by the Blessed One in Sarnath as the very centre of all its affections and loyalties that his two disciples come again back to their home? They will now rest in peace, I hope, for hundreds of years in their original home at Sanchi known and honoured by every Indian without distinction of caste, creed or colour".

Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, President of the Maha Bodhi Society of India, while accepting the relics from the Prime Minister, said:[9] "Today's occasion is a truly historic one. The two great Buddhist saints, Sariputta and Moggallana enjoyed more than anybody else the confidence and esteem of Gautama Buddha. Their sacred relics bring back to our minds the immense influence they brought to bear upon the age in which they lived and the supreme part they individually played in laying the doctrines of Gautama Buddha on a firm and solid foundation. We also look upon them as a symbol of the greatness that once belonged to India, of the spiritual height she attained thousands of years ago, and of the hope that she may attain in the future yet unborn".

Prior to their enshrinement at Sanchi, the sacred relics of Sariputta and Moggallana were taken round to various parts of India to enable the people to pay their

homage to the two chief disciples of the Blessed One. The most spectacular welcome given to these relics was by the people of Bihar, the birth place of both the saints. On March 26, 1949 the sacred relics of Sariputta and Mahamoggallana reached Patna and were welcomed by more than 50000 people with great joy and enthusiasm. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Sri Krishna Sinha, the Chief Minister of Bihar, said with genuine pride and feelings of thankfulness 'the history of Bihar was the epitome of the history of India and nay, in a way, the history of the world itself. India has been the leader of the world through the ages and the credit for this leadership goes to Lore Buddha and his band of selfless disciples."

The celebrations of the home-coming of the relics of Sariputta and Moggallana were concluded with a grand function at Sanchi in November, 1952 which was attended by the Prime Ministers of India and Burma, World Buddhist leaders and Venerable Bhikkhus. Speaking on this occasion, the Prime Minister of India, Jawahar Lal Nehru, said that he saw in the teachings of the Buddha a path leading to progress and prosperity and that he had made it his life mission to make others conscious of this revelation to him. He further said that the incident of the home-coming of the relics had a deeper significance to his mind and that the significance would be realised when all of them had made a living temple in their hearts enshrining ancient memories for guidance in this confused world. Concluding, Nehru said: "Out of this Conference a seed will bloom and spread Happiness". Thus the Sanchi celebrations opened a new vista for the revival of Buddhism in India.

The year 1956 marked a milestone in the chequered history of Buddhism. In that year, the Buddhist Era, which commenced on the day of the Mahaparinirvana of the Buddha, completed 2500 years. This historic event was celebrated with great enthusiasm throughout the Buddhist world. The Buddha Jayanti Celebrations of 1956 undoubtedly marked the beginning of a new era, an era of hope, peace and prosperity for Buddhism. This is particularly true about India. To celebrate the historic event in a befitting manner, the Government of India appointed the Buddha Jayanti Celebrations Committee headed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Vice-President of India. Other members of this Committee were: Chief Minister of

U[illegible], Chief Minister of Bihar; Chief Minister of Assam, Ven. Kushak Bakula, Head Lama of Ladakh; and the Maharaj Kumar of Sikkim. Prime Minister of India was an Associate Member. Under the auspicious of the Celebrations Committee, the Government of India and various State Governments drew up ambitious programmes.

The Maha Buddha Jayanti Celebrations commenced with a message from the President of India. In his message Dr. Rajendra Prasad said,[10] "On this auspicious occasion of the 2500th anniversary of Lord Buddha, I send greetings to my countrymen and indeed to every citizen of the world. It is a solemn day for all those who believe in the supremacy of Virtue and the superiority of human spirit over things mundane and ephemeral. People of the land, where he underwent a process of rigorous penance in search of truth and where he preached the gospel of absolute tolerance and universal peace, are bound to experience a special joy on this occasion".

During the course of the year-long celebrations, thousands of religious and cultural functions were held and millions of pages were written in praise of the Buddha as almost all the Daily Newspapers and Periodical Journals in the country brought out special supplements devoted to the Buddha and Buddhism. In addition, hundreds of books and pamphlets were published in various languages of India. The All India Radio throughout the year broadcasted a number of features, talks and dramas on Buddhism. The Hindi feature films, i.e. Anjali and Angulimal, based on the Buddhist history, were also produced in connection with the 2500th anniversary of Buddhism. The Buddhist shrines were restored, repaired and renovated by the Government with a view to making the visit of the large number of Buddhist pilgrims from India and abroad more comfortable. Approach roads to these centres were repaired; rest-houses and canteens were constructed; and gardens were laid out.

While laying the foundation stone of the Buddha Jayanti Park on the New Delhi ridge, Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru said, "the 2500th Buddha Jayanti Celebrations signify the home-coming of the Buddha". Thus the entire country during the Maha Buddha Jayanti year was swept by the Buddha-spirit.

Another important event of the year 1956 was the home-coming of the Sacred Relics of Arahat Moggaliputta Tissa and nine other Arahats who lived at the time of

Asoka. These relics were in the possession of the British Museum, London, where they were taken in 1851. These relics were brought back on February 5, 1956 by Shrimati Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Indian High Commissioner in U.K. and were received at Delhi Airport at a colourful function by Prime Minister Nehru. The first casket containing the relics of Moggaliputta, Kosikiputta and Gotiputta was presented by the Government of India to the Government of Ceylon. The other two caskets containing the relics of Mahyavanya, Apagira, Kodiniputta, Vachiya-Savijayata, Kasapa-gota, Majhima and Haritiputta were presented to the Maha Bodhi Society of India who enshrined them in the New Cetiyagiri Vihara at Sanchi.[11]

The most outstanding event of the 2500th Buddha Jayanti Celebrations took place on October 14 of that year. On that day, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar took formal refuge in Buddhism, alongwith half a million followers, at an impressive and historic ceremony held at Nagpur and gave a clarion call to his countrymen to follow the teachings of the Buddha. Never before, so many people had, at one time and at the instance of one man, changed their religion. History will remember Dr. Ambedkar for re-transplanting Buddhism in the land of its birth, a step which has revitalised Buddhism and made it once again a living religion.

In November-December 1964, India was once again swept by Buddha-spirit. The occasion was provided by the Seventh Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists which was held at Sarnath, the Holy Isipatna, from November 29 to December 4. This being the first Conference of the W.F.B. to be held in India, the Indian Buddhists were naturally excited and they came in full strength to meet, and exchange ideas with their brethern from foreign lands. Out of 68 delegates and 75 observers drawn from 23 countries, the Indian delegation was the largest. They came from all parts of India.

Inaugurating the Conference, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the illustrious philosopher-President of India exhorted[12] the distinguished gathering "to follow sincerely the teachings of the Great Master not merely, in letter, but in spirit". He said, "The Buddha has given us a message which is of permanent value, which is an eternal message, which is of a timeless character, but we are unworthy decendents of that Great Master. He was a man who was superior, ahead of his time, a man who came out

and told us what we should do if we want to recover our balance, our harmony, our love, our friendship. If we wish to live in brotherly love, we must develop the 'Bodhi Hridya' the heart of Enlightenment, the heart of love, the heart of understanding."

In 1976, the Buddhist world celebrated the 2600th Birth Anniversary of the Buddha. In India, as part of the year-long celebrations of this historic event an International Buddhist Seminar on 'Contribution of Buddhism to World Civilisation and Culture' was held in the Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi from 27 to 29 March, 1977. This Seminar was organised by the Maha Bodhi Society of India in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Government of India, who gave financial assistance for this purpose. Thirty foreign participants from Bhutan, Canada, Federal Republic of Germany, German Democratic Republic, Hong Kong, Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, United Kingdom, United States of America, U.S.S.R. and five different organisations from Japan as well as fifty participants from different parts of India attended the Seminar. In addition, 18 persons participated as observers. Ven. L. Ariyawansa Maha Thera welcomed the delegates.

The Seminar was inaugurated by B.D. Jatti, the Acting President of the Republic of India. In his inauguration Address, he said:[13]

"Scholars have recognised that the sixth century BC was remarkable for the spiritual unrest and intellectual ferment that existed during that period in many countries. It was the period of Mahavira and the Buddha in India, of Parmenides and Empedocles in Greece, of Zarathustra in Iran and of Lao Izu and Confucius in China. It was a period of new spiritual inheritances and new points of view, emerging to dispel the moral and spiritual confusion in which the people were floundering. In India, it was the birth of Buddhism that heralded a a revolutionary transformation in the concept of values and way of life of the people. The propagation of Buddhism was an attempt to save society from superstition, crass materialism and ethical scepticism. More than 2500 years have gone by since the Buddha attained Maha Pari Nirvana near Kusinagara. But the doctrine he taught for 45 years has remained an unfailing source of inspiration to a large section of humanity representing about a third of the

population of the world."

The inaugural ceremony was concluded with a vote of thanks by Ven. Dr. N. Jinaratana Nayaka Thera, General Secretary of the Maha Bodhi Society of India. In all, 36 papers were tabled, of these, 26 most important pieces of research as well as Report of the Seminar have been published in the from of a book "Buddhism's Contribution to the World Culture and Civilisation". This volume was edited by Dr. Anand W. P. Guruge, and D.C. Ahir.

Though most of the Buddhist ancient sites were discovered and excavated during the pre-Independence days, the post-Independence period from 1947 onwards has also claimed some notable discoveries. Of these, the most important discovery being the identification of Kapilavastu, the capital city of the Sakyas and the scene of Buddha's early life.

The location of Kapilavastu has been a matter of controversy for over hundered years. Tilaurakot in Nepal and Piprahwa in India have been the main claimants for the site of Kapilavastu. Fuhrer, a German archaeologist commissioned by the Government of Nepal in 1896 put forward for the first time the claim of Tilaurakot as Kapilavastu. However, the discovery in 1898 of a huge stone coffer containing five relic-caskets from the Piprahwa stupa by W.C. Peppe, Landlord of the Birdpur estate, indicated that Piprahwa was the likely site of ancient Kapilavastu. Since the third century BC inscription, which made reference to the Buddha and the Sakyas, was interpreted by the scholars in different ways and there was no reference to Kapilavastu, the matter remained unresolved for the next 75 years.

In 1970, Ven. Dharmakirti, a Buddhist monk, incharge of the Naugarh centre of the Maha Bodhi Society of India, wrote to the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, drawing her attention to the most neglected condition of the Piprahwa ruins and requested her to do something in the matter. This representation trickled down to the Patna Archaeological Circle. K.M. Srivastava, who had taken over the Patna Circle in August 1970, immediately made plans to undertake further excavation at Piprahwa in district Basti of Uttar Pradesh. In January 1971, he started fresh excavations at the site. Picking up the threads where Peppe had left in 1898, Srivastava went downward. Fresh excavations showed that the stupa, which had earlier yielded relic caskets, enclosed a mud

stupa. When this mud stupa was carefully probed it yielded in March 1972, two soapstone relic caskets containing charred bones of the Buddha and three dishes containing ashes. The relic casket found in the northern chamber was intact and was 12 cm x 7 cm. The relic casket in the southern chamber was 16 cm x 9 cm. As it was broken, the bones were rather muddy.

During further excavations in 1973, Srivastava and his team found from the adjacent Eastern Monastery more than 40 terracotta sealings with the legends in Pali "Devaputra Vihare Kapilavastu Bhikkhu Sanghas" and "Maha Kapilavastu Bhikkhu Sanghas" in Brahmi script of AD first century. In 1974, some more similar sealings were discovered, and the identification[14] of Kapilavastu was clinched when the archaeologists found the lid of a pot carrying the same inscription as the first group of sealings.

The excavations revealed that the Piprahwa Stupa was built in three phases: the earliest mud stupa was built by the Sakyas in the fifth century BC over their share of the corporeal relics of the Buddha; it was enclosed by an enlarged stupa in the third century BC from which W.C. Peppe had discovered five relic caskets, and finally it was enlarged in the first century AD when the Eastern Monastery was also built. According to inscriptions, the Eastern Monastery was built by the Kushana Kings, Kanishka (AD 78-101) for the Bhikkhu-Sangha of Kapilavastu. The archaeologists also exposed three other monasteries. The remains of the ancient town have been found at the nearby Ganwaria site where large scale excavations exposed two massive brick structures. These are believed to be the residential complex of the Sakya chief, King Suddhoddhana, father of the Buddha.

Piprahwa, the ancient Kapilavastu, is 22 km from Naugarh a railway station on the Gorakhpur-Gonda loop line of North-Eastern Railway, and 9 km from Birdpur on the road to Lumbini from Naugarh.

The relics of the Buddha discovered from Kapilavastu are presently with the National Museum, New Delhi.

Another significant archaeological discovery of post-Independence era was made in 1976, the year of 2600th Birth Anniversary of Lord Buddha, when more than 100 rare and valuable sculptures and other art pieces of the Kushana and Gupta periods were found near the Mathura water works and Bhuteshwar railway station

in the western outskirts of the Mathura city. These were unearthed[15] while levelling a large mound for construction of houses for the Govindnagar Housing Society. The antiquities include valuable sculptures of the Kushana and Gupta periods, fragments of railings, pillars, cross-bars, coping-stones, lintel beams and architraves-- the remains of the famous 'Viradatta Vihara' which once stood there. One of the sculptures represents the standing Buddha with lovely curly hair, elongated ear-lobes and a very subtle and serene expression on the face. On the transparent drappery with beautiful rippling folds of the sculpture there is an inscription on the pedestal dated the 125th year of the Gupta era (corresponding to AD 434) furnishing important information. It gives the name of the sculpture as Dinna. The date on this sculpture falls in the reign of King Kumaragupta Mahendraditya. Another remarkable specimen is large-size image of the Buddha in the 'abhaya' posture. The upper half of this piece is in an excellent state of preservation. There are also a number of other pieces depicting Buddha and Bodhisattvas in different forms and attitudes. A small fragment portrays beautifully the great event of the Buddha's renunciation when the hoofs of his horse were supported by the celestials.

Buddhism in India has come a long way since the revival movement began a hundred years ago. As against a meagre population of about 50000 in 1891, the population of Buddhists in India, according to 1981 Census, is 47, 19, 796[16] or 4.7 million constituting 0.71 per cent of the total population of the country (665 million). In modern India, majority of the Buddhists follow the Theravada tradition. The Buddhists living in the high Himalayas are Mahayanists. The Indian Buddhists can be further divided into four distinct groups.

Firstly, there are survivals from the Buddhist period. Secondly, there are the ethnic over-laps from the Buddhist period. Secondly, there are the ethnic over-laps from the neighbouring countries, such as Nepal, Thailand and Burma. The third category is represented by those who were attracted towards Buddhism as a result of the missionary movement spearheaded by the Maha Bodhi Society. The followers of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar who adopted the Buddhist way of life in October 1956 and after form the fourth group. Of all the groups, the followers of Dr. Ambedkar form the most dominant group. Maharashtra,

the home state of Babasaheb Ambedkar, has the largest Buddhist population: 39,46,149 or 83.60 per cent of the total Buddhist population of India. Eight more States having Buddhist population of more than 50,000 are: West Bengal (1, 56, 296), Sikkim (90, 848) Arunachal Pradesh (86, 483), Madhya Pradesh (75, 312), Jammu and Kashmir (69, 706), Tripura (54, 806), Uttar Pradesh (54, 542) and Himachal Pradesh (52, 629). Six other states have more than 5,000 Buddhists. These Are: Karnataka (42, 147), Mizoram (40, 429), Andhra Pradesh (12, 830), Orissa (8.028), Gujarat (7,550) and Delhi (7,117). Thus Buddhism is once again a living religion in India and the Buddhists are playing a significant role in the national life.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Chapter I

1. According to tradition, the Buddha was born in 624-23 BC and attained Mahaparinirvana in 544-43 BC. Some scholars opine that the Buddha was born in 567 BC and attained Mahaparinirvana in 487 BC.
2. Lumbini is in Nepal, just 10 km from the Indo-Nepalese border touching district Basti in Uttar Pradesh. Kapilavastu has since been identified with Piprahwa in District Basti in U.P.
3. As a mother who has borne a Future Buddha will never give birth to another child, Mahamaya passed away after seven days. The child was, therefore, brought up by his stepmother, Prajapati, who was sister of Mahamaya.

4-9. Vinaya, Maha Vagga, I, Mahakhandhaka. The life of the Buddha is essentially based on Pali sources.

10. Vinaya, Culla Vagga, 6,4.
11. Vinaya, Culla Vagga, Bhikhunikhandhaka.
12. Anguttara Nikaya, i, 189.
13. Vinaya I, 234-236.
14. Dhammapadattha Katha, 164.
15. Theragatha.

16. Sutta Nipata, Vasala Sutta.
17. Maha Vagga, 8, Civarakkhandhaka.
18. Digha Nikaya, ii, Samannaphala Sutta.
19. Digha Nikaya, xvi, Maha-Parinibbana Sutta.
20. Ibid.
21. E.W. Hopkins, *Religions of India*, 1895. cf. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, *Writings and Speeches*, Volume 3 - compiled by Vasant Moon, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1987, pp. 167-68.
22. Extracted from *The Buddha and His Dhamma* by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, 1957, pp. 595-97.

CHAPTER II

(i) Buddhist Kings

Asoka

1. In Rock Edict XIII, Shabbazgarhi Text, Asoka says:

   "The country of the Kalingas was conquered by King Priyadarsi, Beloved of the Gods, eight years after his coronation. In this War in Kalinga, men and animals 1,50,000 were carried away captive from that country, as many as 1,00,000 were killed there in action, and many times that number perished. After that, now that the country of the Kalingas has been conquered, the Beloved of the Gods, is devoted to a longing for Dhamma and to the inculcation of Dhamma among the people. This is due to the repentance of the Beloved of the Gods on having conquered the country of the Kalingas". cf. D.C. Sircar, Inscriptions of Asoka, Delhi, 1957, pp. 51-52.
2. Minor Rock Edict I, Maski (Andhra Pradesh) and Gujarra (Madhya Pradesh) texts. cf. D.C. Sircar, Inscriptions of Asoka, pp. 34-35.
3. D.C. Sircar, Inscriptions of Asoka, Minor Rock Edict I, p. 33. This edict has been found at Sahasaram (Bihar), Ahraura (U.P), Bairat (Rajasthan), Bahapur (Delhi), Rupnath, Gujarra, (Madhya Pradesh), Brahmagiri, Jaitinga-Ramesvara, Siddhapura (Karnataka), and Maski, Yerragudi, Gavimath, Palkigundu, Rajula-Mandagiri (Andhra Pradesh).

4. Sircar, *Inscriptions of Asoka*, Minor Rock Edict III, p.38.
5. Sircar translates the seven texts listed by Asoka as under: the Exaltation of Discipline; the Noble States of Living; the Fears to Come; the Song of the Hermit; the Discourse on the State of a Hermit; the Questions of Upatishya; and the Exhortation to Rahula, which was delivered by the Lord Buddha on the subject of falsehood. These texts have been identified with the following texts in the Tipitaka: Vinaya-samukasa -- Vinaya-samukkansa-- "select passages from Vinaya", cf. Atthavasa-Vagga in the Anguttara-Nikaya, 1. 98-100. Aliya-vasani-- Ariya-vasa (dasa) "The excellent state of mind", Digha-Nikaya, III, 269, 291; Anagata-bhavani (panca), Anguttara, III. 100-110. Muni-gatha--Muni-sutta, Sutta-Nipata, 1.12. (sutta). Moneya-suta--Nalaka-sutta, Ibid., III. II (sutta). Upatisa-pasine-- Sariputta-sutta, "What Upatissa (Sariputta) asked", Ibid., IV. 16. Laghulovade - Rahulovada, "Instruction to Rahula", cf. Ambalatthika-Rahulovada-sutta, Majjhima Nikaya, 1. 414-20.-Sujitkumar Mukhopadhyaya, The Asoka-vadana, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1963, Appendix B, Asoka Inscriptions, p. 154.
6. Romila Thapar, *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, Delhi, 1973, Appendix V, A Translation of the Edicts of Asoka, p. 262.
7. R.K. Mookerji, *Asoka*, Delhi 3rd edition, 1962, pp. 61-62.
8. Romila Thapar, *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, 3rd Major Rock Edict, p. 251.
9. Ibid., 4th Major Rock Edict, p. 251.
10. Ibid., 11th Major Rock Edict, pp. 254-255.
11. Sircar, *Inscriptions of Asoka*, Pillar Edict II, p. 68.
12. Ibid., Pillar Edict VII, pp. 75-76.

13. Radha Kumud Mookerji, *Asoka*, Delhi, 1986 edition, pp. 144-145.

14. B.M. Barua, *Asoka and His Inscriptions*, Calcutta, 1968, 3rd Edition, Major Rock Edict, p. 246.

15. Sircar, *Inscriptions of Asoka*, Rock Edicts XV and XVI, pp. 56 and 59.

16. Radha Kumud Mookerji, *Asoka*, 1986 edition, p. 192.

17. The following three verses are taken from "The Sacred Books of the East-Edited by F. Max Muller, Volume X Part II - The Sutta-Nipata - Translated from Pali by V. Fausboll, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1973 edition. "8. The man who has the strength of understanding is endowed with virtue and (holy) works, is composed, delights in meditation, is thoughtful, free from ties, free from harshness, and free from passion, him the wise style a Muni". (211).
-- 1.12- Muni Suta, p.34.

"31. Applying himself to meditation, and being wise, let him find his pleasure in the outskirts of the wood, let him meditate at the root of a tree enjoying himself". (709).
---III. 11-Nalaka Sutta, P. 129.

"18, Let him be with downcat eyes, and not prying, devoted to meditation, very watchful; having acquired equanimity let him with a composed mind cut off the seat of doubt, and misbehaviour". (972).
-- IV. 10-Sariputta Sutta, P.182.

18. Sircar, *Inscriptions of Asoka*, p. 43.

19. Ibid., p. 54.

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21. These relics were found by Cunningham within a relic-chamber box of sandstone, eastern face of which was inscribed with 'savina vinayakana aram Kasapa-gotam upadaya aram cha Vachhi-Suvijayitam vinayaka', i.e. 'relics of all teachers including arhat Kasapa-gota and arhat Vachhi-Suvijayita, the teacher'. Inside the box were found four small relic-caskets of mottled steatite inscribed with the names of the ten saints, namely Kasapagota, Majjhima, Haritiputa, Vachhiya-Suvijayata, Mahavanaya, Apagira, Kodiniputa, Kosikiputa, Gotiputa and Moggaliputa. These relics were brought back to India in 1956 from the British Museum, London at the time of the 2500th Buddha Jayanti Celebrations. The first relic-casket containing the relics of Moggaliputta Tissa, Kosikiputta and Gotiputta was presented by the Government of India to the Government of Sri Lanka. The other relics were presented to the Maha Bodhi Society of India who enshrined them in the New Vihara at Sanchi. cf. D.C. Ahir, Buddhism in Modern India, Nagpur, 1972, p. 37.

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(ii) **Saints and Scholars**
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CHAPTER VI

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2. According to Manu, "A Brahman should be fined 50 panas for defaming a Kshatriya, 25 panas for defaming a Vaisya, and 12 panas for defaming a Sudra, but a Sudra who defamed a Brahman should have his tongue cut out, "for he is of low origin". And if he mentioned the names and castes of the twice-born with contumely, an iron nail ten fingures long should be thurst red-hot into his mouth". (VIII, 268-271)." With whatever limb a man of low caste does hurt a man of the highest caste, even that limb shall be cut off. "VIII, 279)."
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7. K.N. Upadhayaya, Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgita, 1971, pp. 32-34.

8. Cf. Bhagchandra Jain, Jainism in Buddhist Literature, pp. 29-30.

CHAPTER VIII

1. Selections of the Sacred writings of the Sikhs-a Unesco publication-- 1960, p. 43,26th hymn of the Japji by Guru Nanak.

2. Ibid. p. 49, 35th hymn of the Japji.

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4. Selections of the Sacred Writings of the Sikhs, p. 206, Rag Gauri (p. 209).

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2. JASB, Volume VII.

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13. Buddhism's Contribution to the World Culture and Civilization edited by Ananda Guruge and D.C. Ahir, pp. 35-36.
14. Though the identification of Kapilavastu was confirmed in 1974, the discovery was, however, announced only on 22 Junuary, 1976 by Shri K.M. Srivastava in an exclusive interview to Subhash Kirpekar, see Times of India Delhi edition, January 23, 1976. The romantic story of the discovery of the relics of the Buddha from Piprahwa and its identification with Kapilavastu has since been told by K.M. Srivastava in his book 'Discovery of Kapilavastu', 1986.
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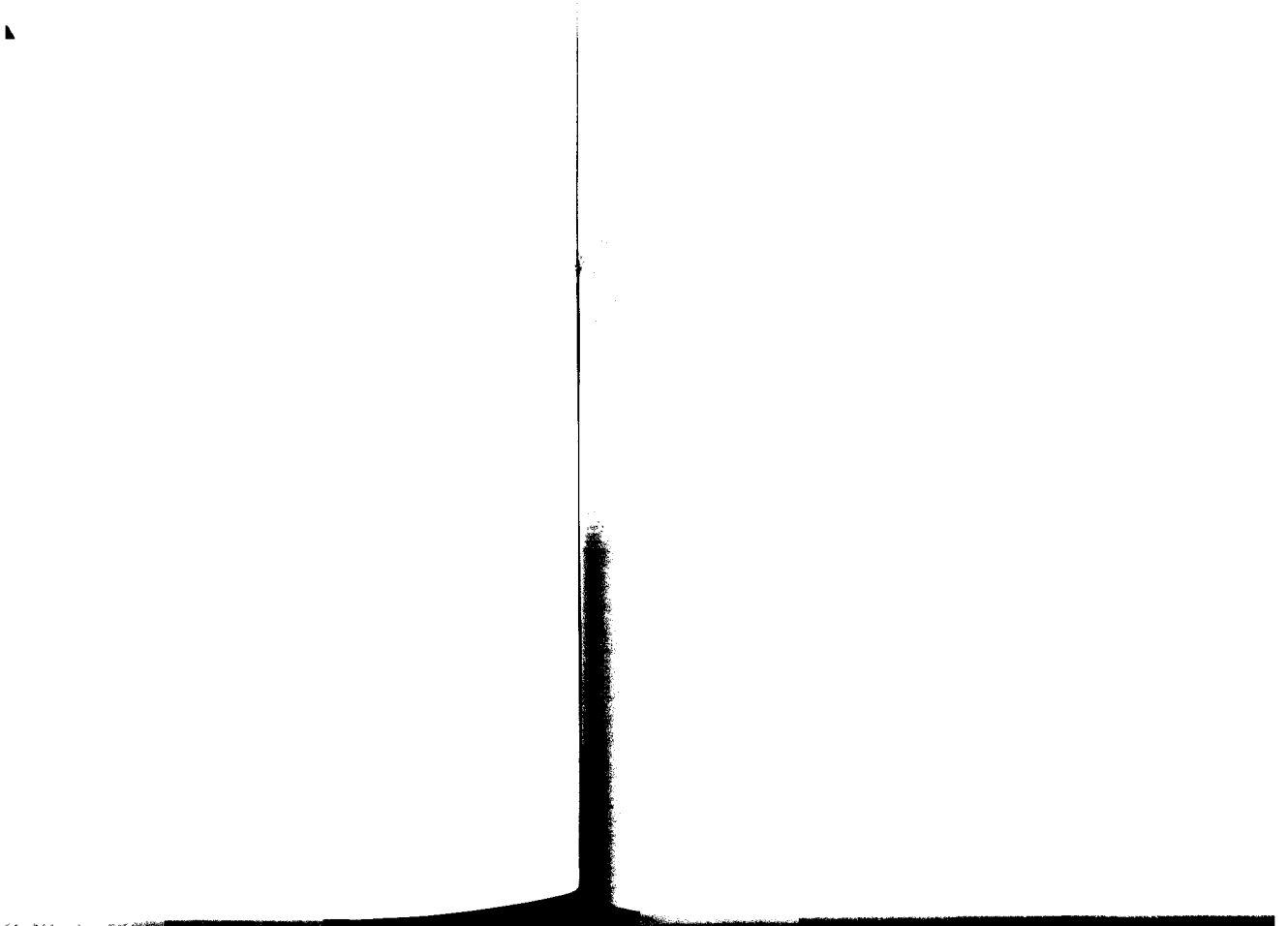
PLATES



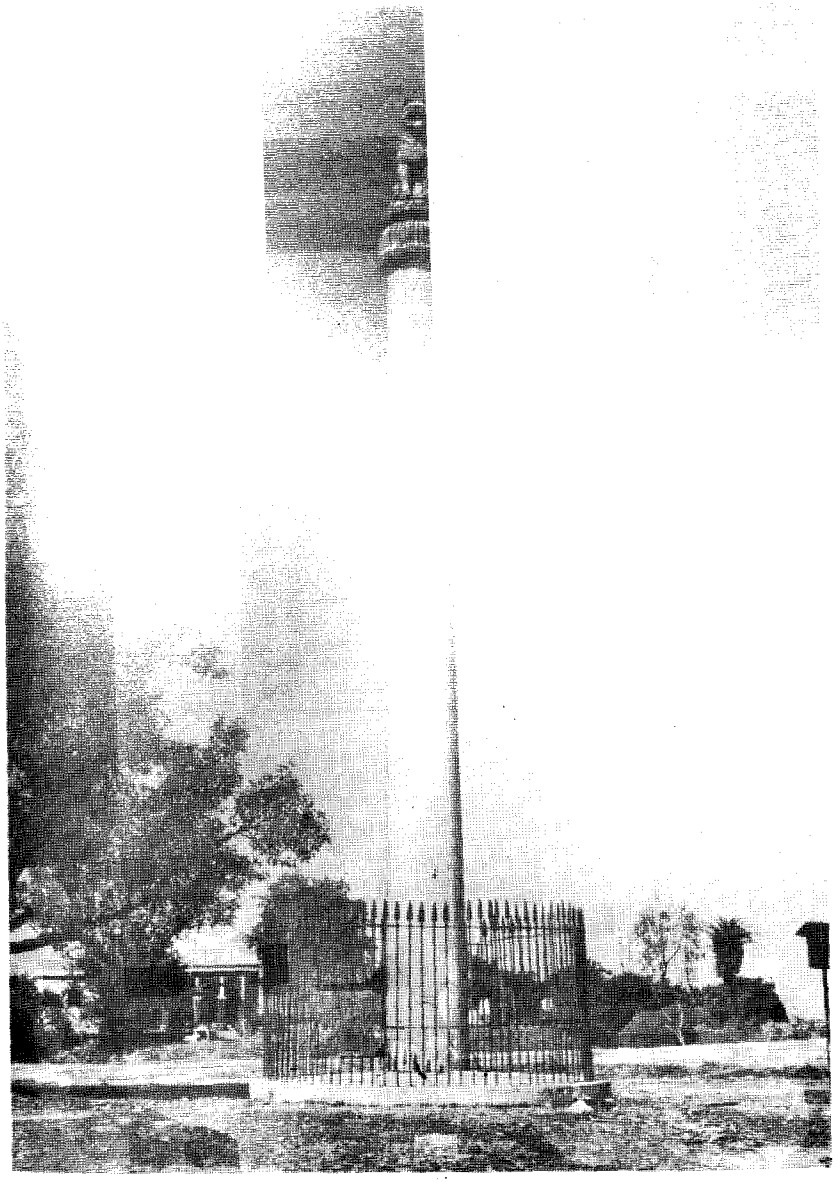


Plate 1. Asokan Pillar, Lauriya-Nandangarh, Bihar

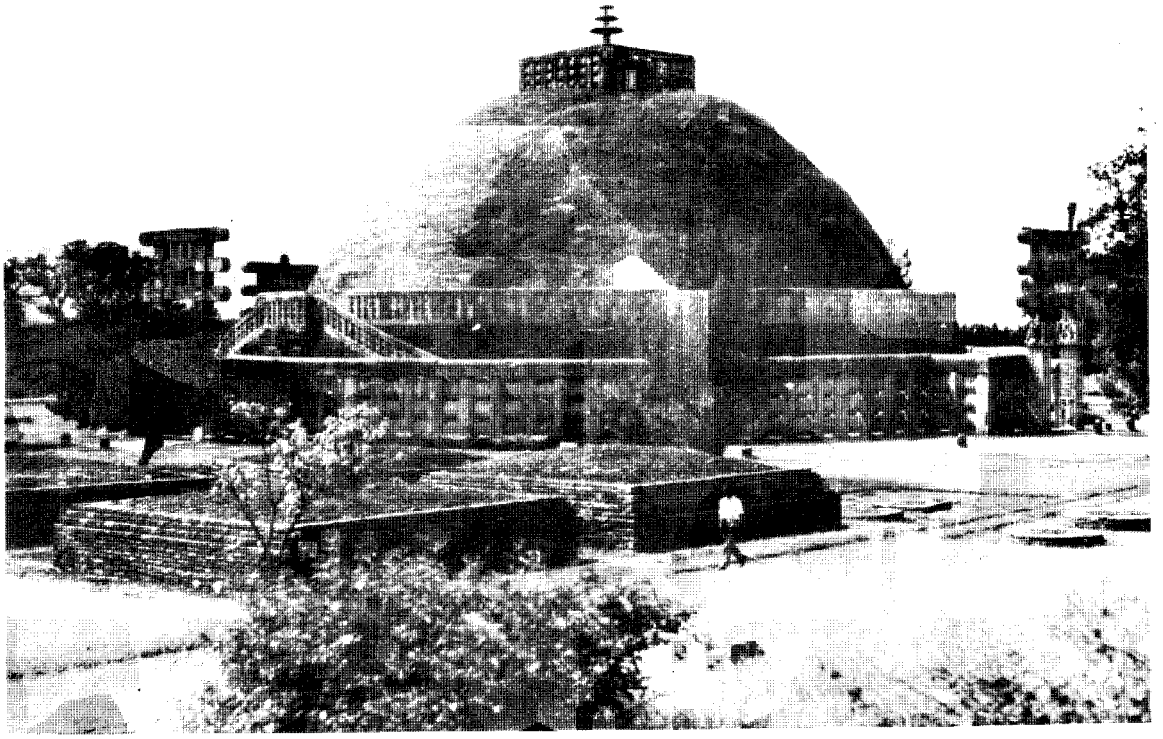


Plate 2. General View of the Great Sanchi Stupa

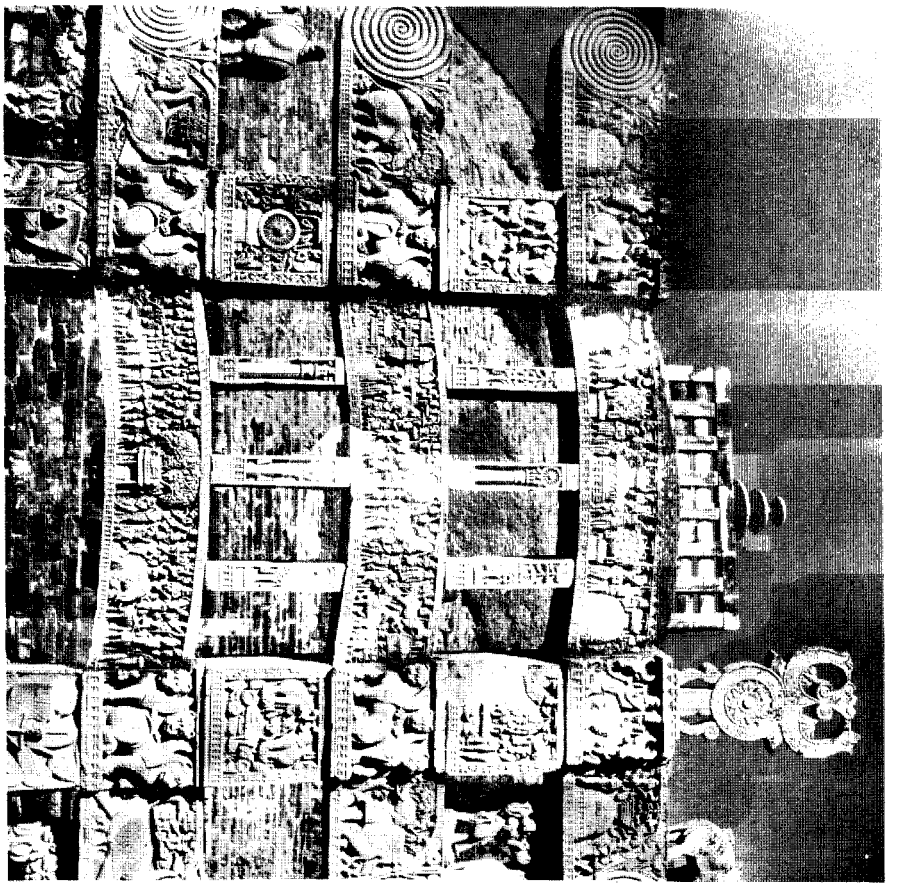


Plate 3. South-East Gateway Front, Sanchi Stupa

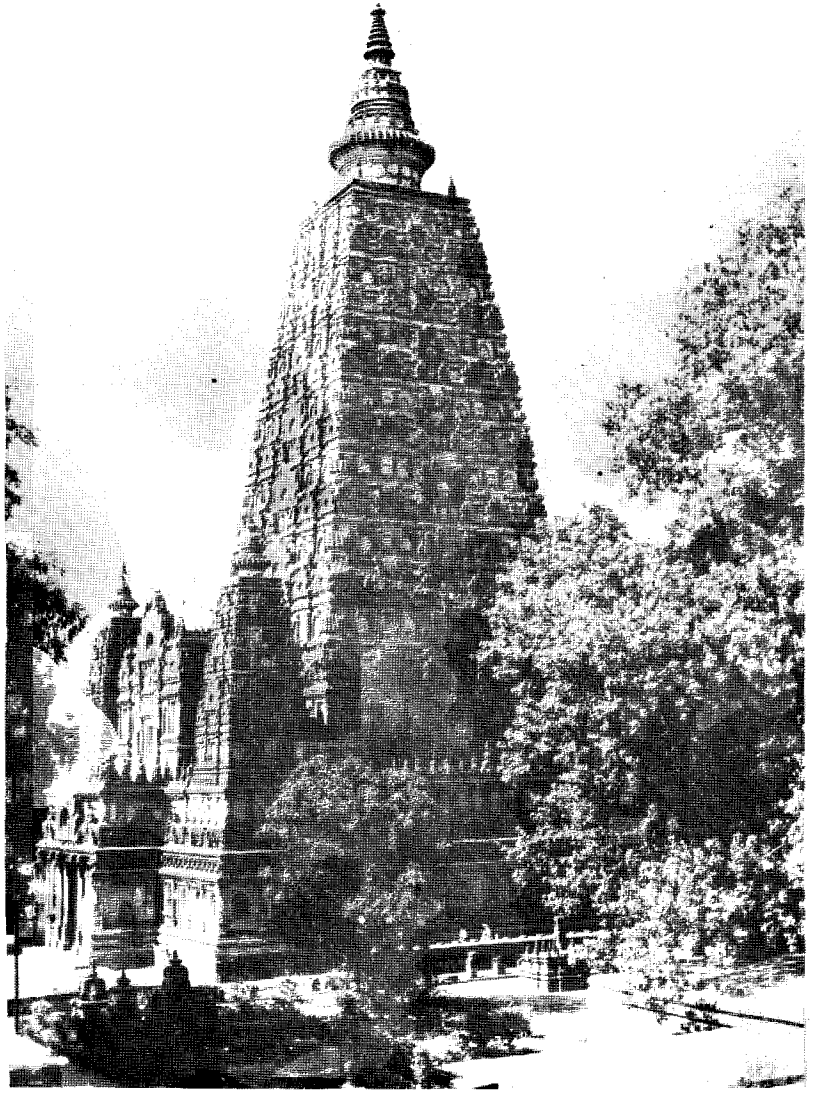


Plate 4. The Maha Bodhi Temple, Bodh Gaya

Plate 5. Verandah Painting, Cave XVII, Ajanta

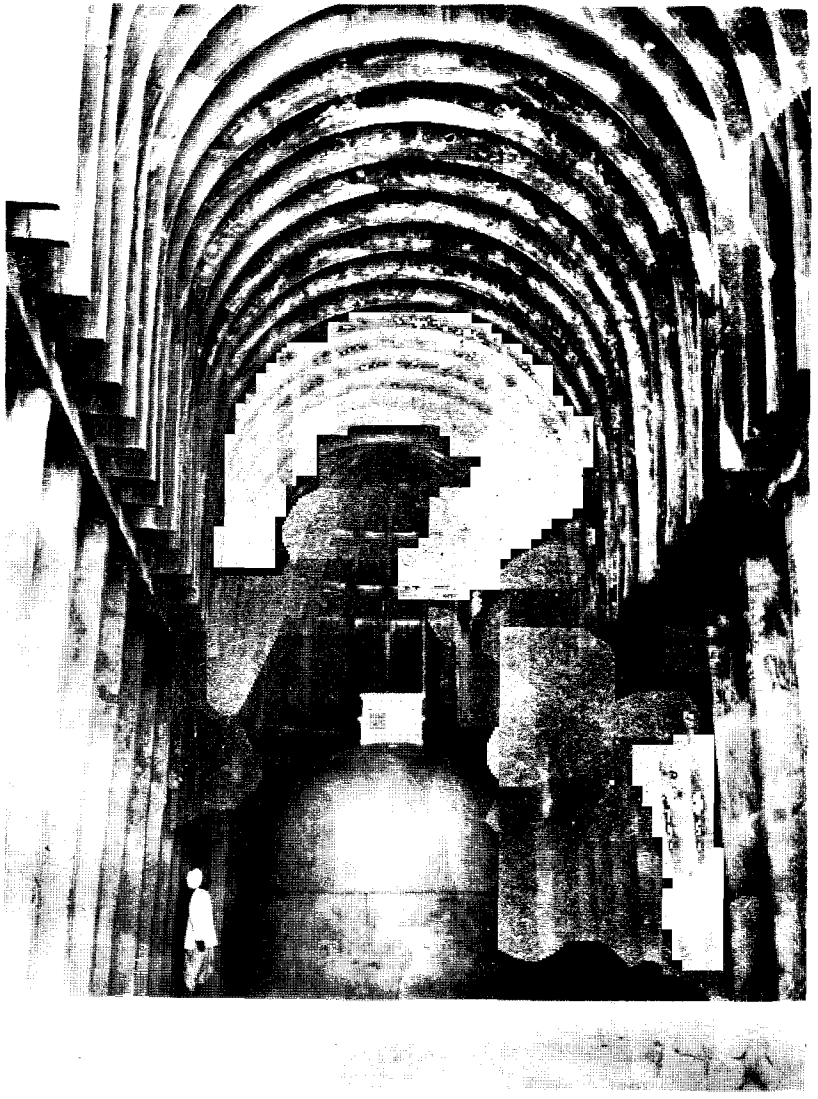


Plate 6. The Chaitya-hall, Bhaja

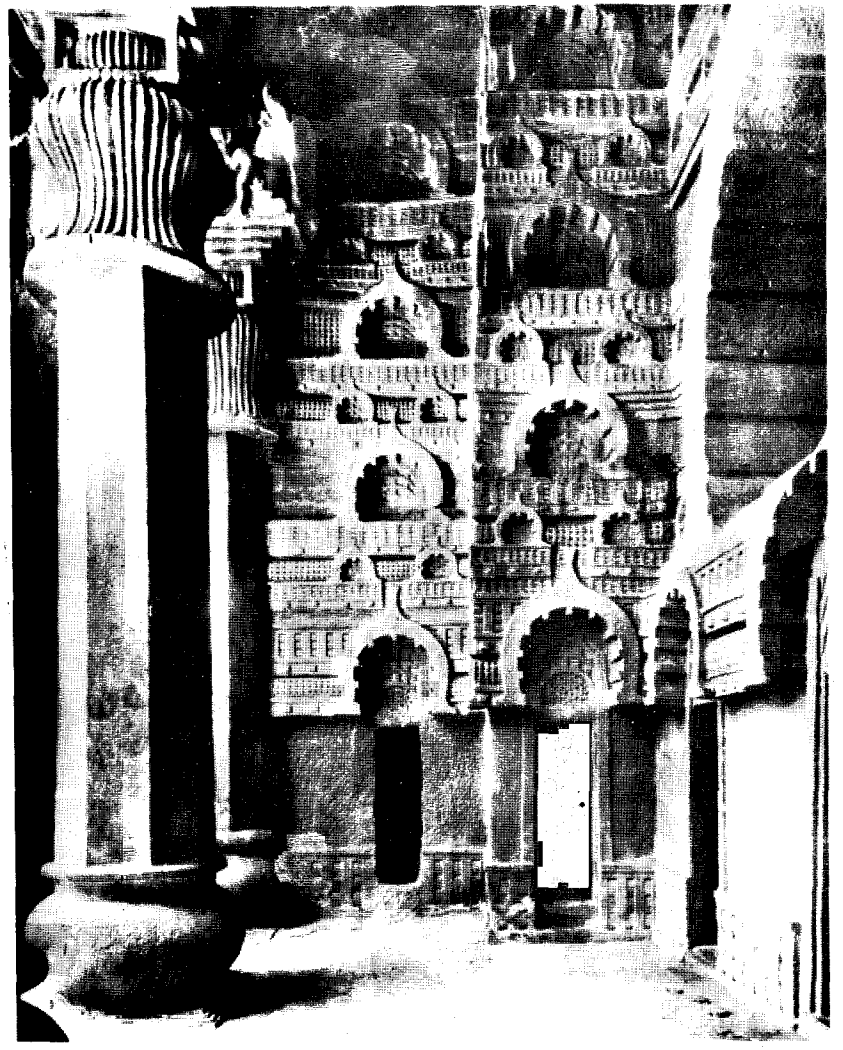


Plate 7. Verandah of the Chaitya-hall, Bedsa

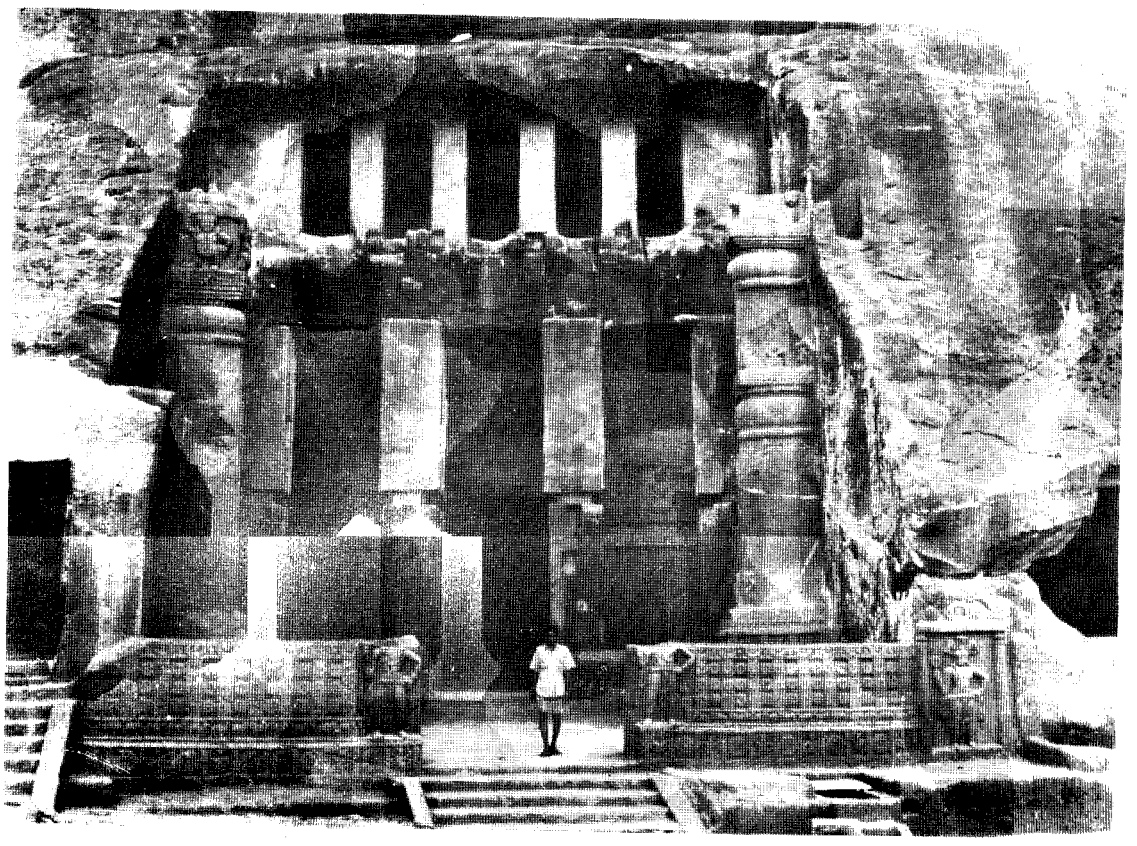


Plate 8. General View of Cave 3, Kanheri

Plate 9. General View of the Main Shrine, Cave 18, Nasik

Plate 10. The Buddha image from Mathura. 5th century AD-now in the Darbar Hall, Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi

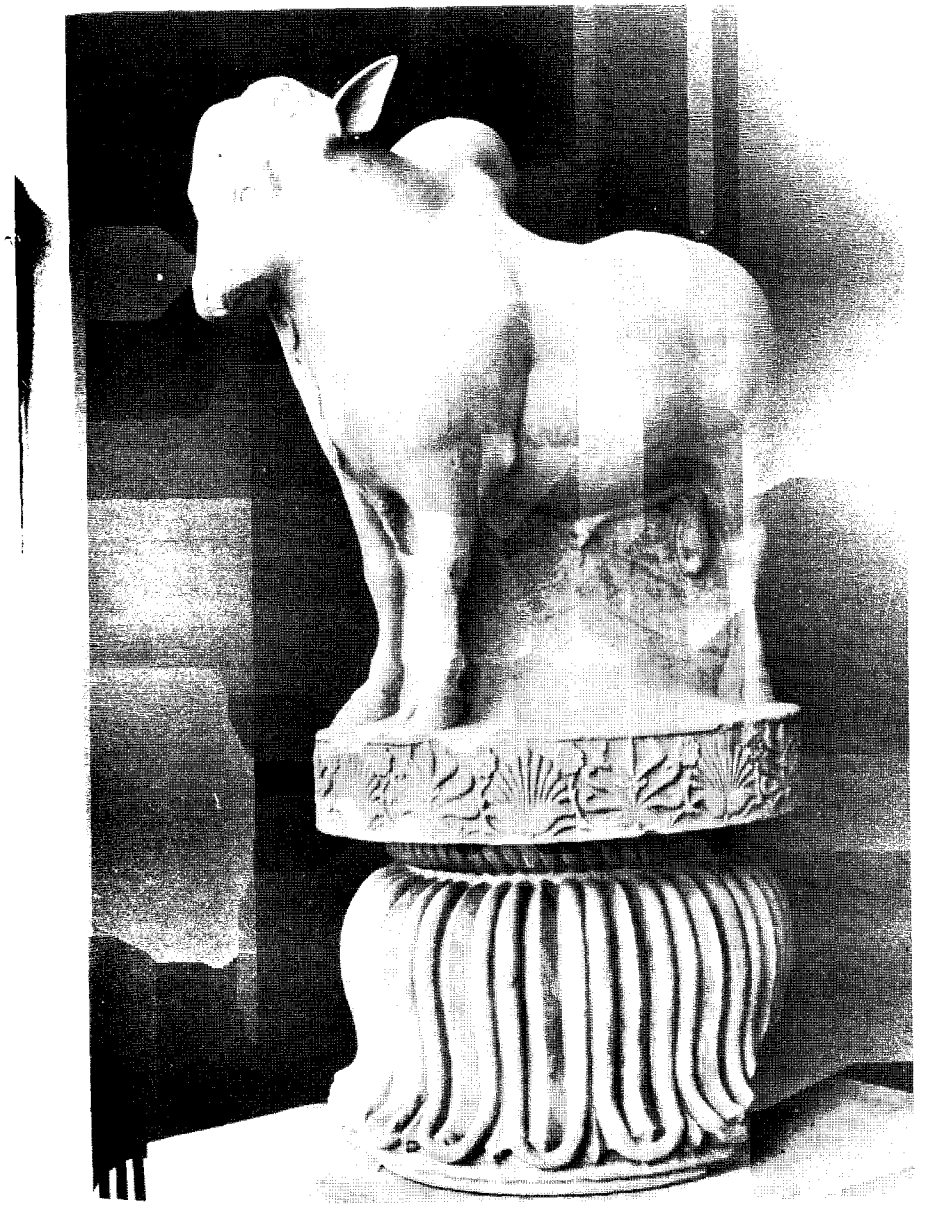


Plate 11. The Bull Capital of the Asokan Pillar at Rampurva, Bihar-3rd Century BC--now in Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi

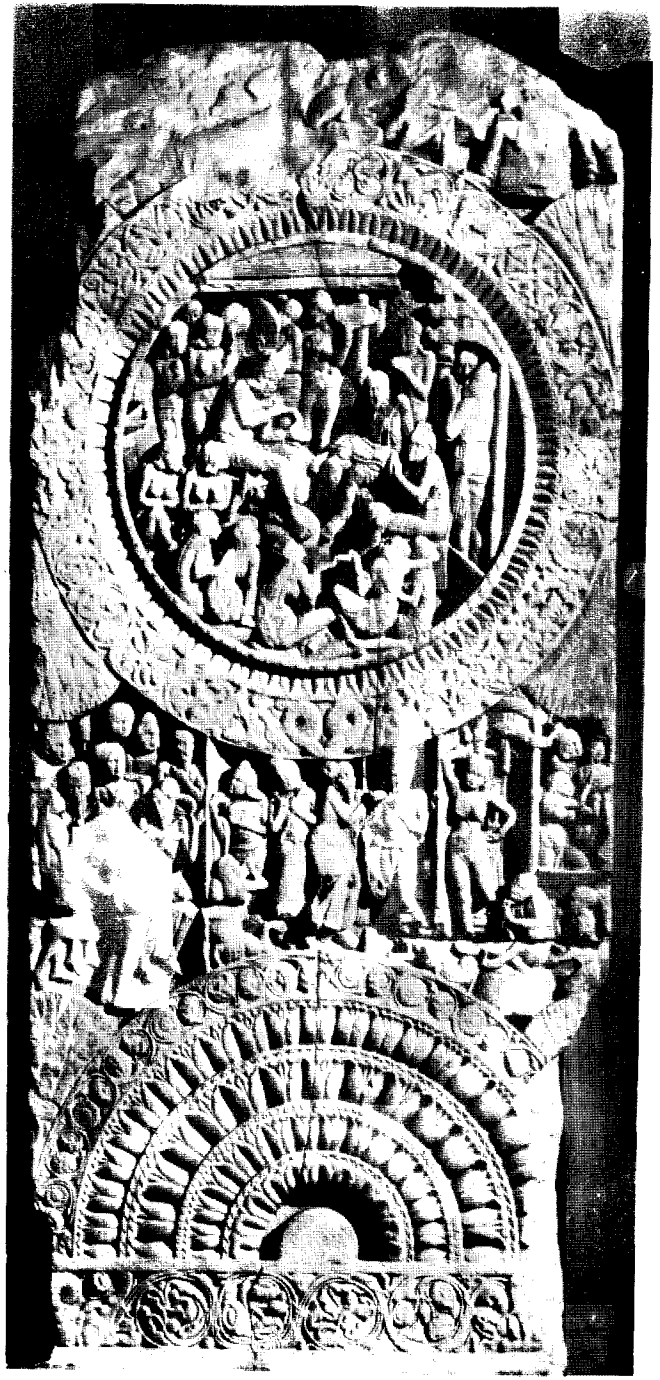


Plate 12. Asita's visit to Suddhodana, Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh, Ist-2nd Century AD--now in National Museum, New Delhi

Plate 13 Stupa Slab, Nagarjunakonda, Andhra Pradesh, 3rd Century AD--now in National Museum, New Delhi

19-7-1994

Plate 14. Head of the Buddha, Stucco, Gandhara, 3rd-4th Century AD, National Museum, New Delhi

Plate 15. Soap Stone Relic-Casket, discovered from Piprahwa (Kapilavastu) in 1972--National Museum, New Delhi

late 16. Bharhut Rail Gateway, Indian Museum, Calcutta

Plate 17. Bharhut medallion, Presentation of Jetavana by Anathapindika of Sravasti, Indian Museum, Calcutta

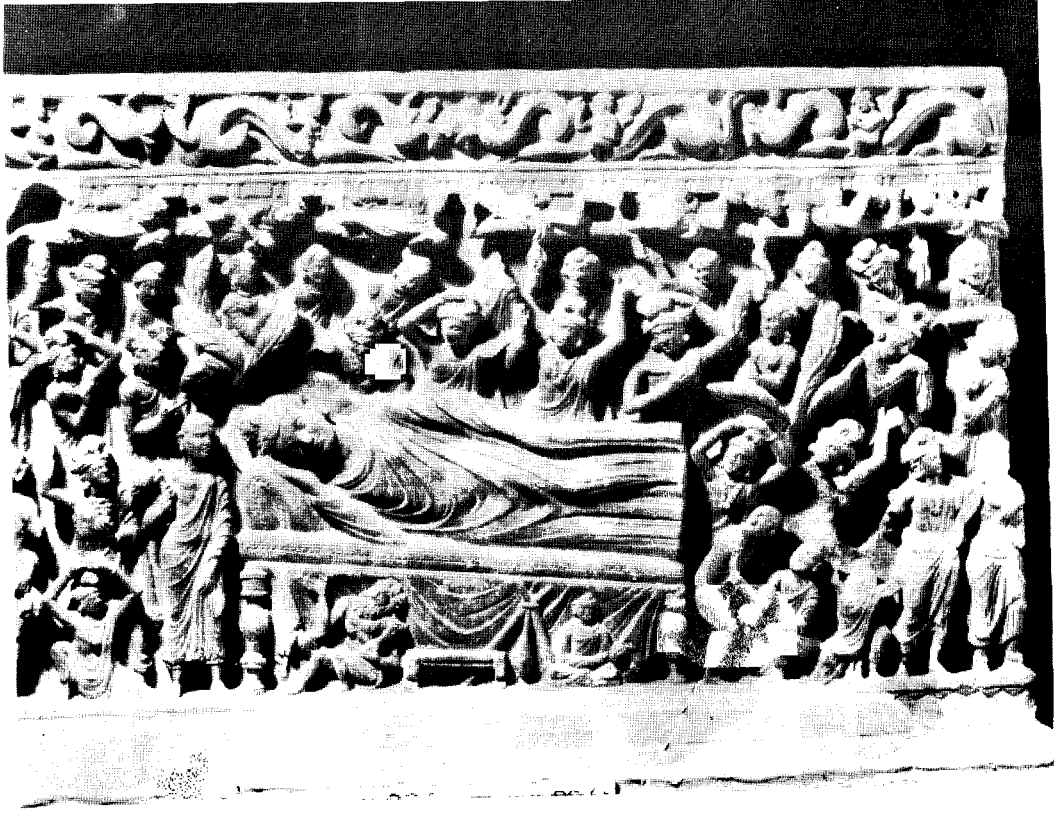


Plate 18. The Great Decease, Gandhara, 3rd Century AD--Indian Museum, Calcutta

Plate 19. The Subjugation of Nalagiri, Amaravati, 2nd Century AD--Government Museum, Madras

Plate 20. Translation of the bowl of the Buddha, Amaravati, 2nd Century AD--Government Museum, Madras

Plate 21. The Great Departure

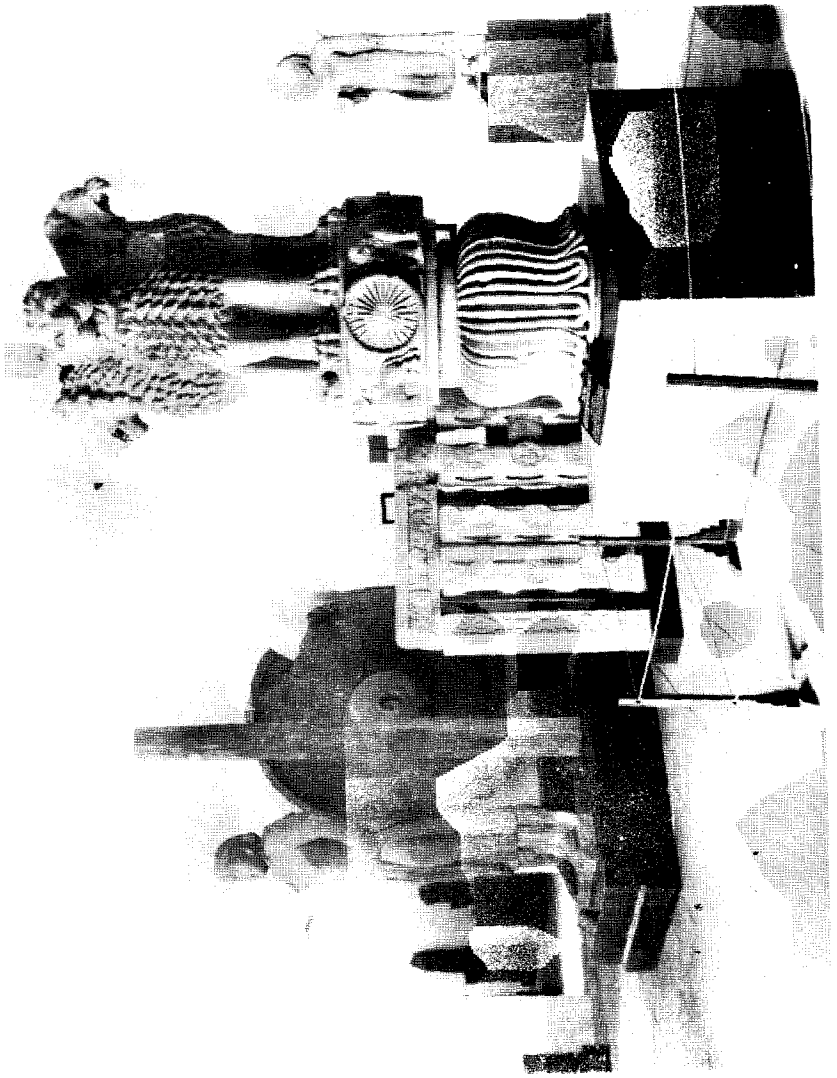


Plate 22. View of the Museum Gallery, Sarnath Museum, inter-alia displaying the Lion Capital of Asoka.

INDEX

Abhidharmajnanaprasthana Sastra, 36, 74
Acharya, Madhava, 130
Achyutananda, 133
Adi Buddha, 133
Adi-Dharmis, 133
Advaita, 225
Afghanistan, 20, 34, 102
  Rock edicts of, 21
Ahimsa, 29
Ahir, D.C., 275
Ajanta caves, 49, 92, 93, 112, 164, 165-79
  Art of, 165-69
  atakas of, 168-79
Ajatasatru, 11, 13
Ajivakas, 7, 117
Alavi, 9
Alexander, 249
Allahabad, 22, 154, 259
Amaravati,
  Inscriptions of, 88-89
  Museum, 205-09
  Stupa, 45, 88, 126
Ambapali, 13
Ambedkar, B.R., 31, 118, 119, 134, 262, 273, 277, 278
Amritabhavana, 48
Amritananda, 61
Anand, 275
Ananda, 6, 7, 11, 61, 209
Anathapindika, 7
Andhra Pradesh
  Buddhism in, 45-46, 136, 137
  Buddhist caves in, 188, 189
Anuradhapura, 28
Archaeological Survey of India, 206, 212
Aristotle, 29
Arnold, Edwin, 261
Arya Deva, 67-69
Aryasura, 75
Art, 153-217
  Caves in States, 188-91
  Cave temples, 166-88
  On site, 153-66
Asanga, 69, 70
Asiatic Society of Bengal, 259, 260
Asoka, 17-32, 79, 85, 112, 120, 259
  Administration on Dhamma tenets, 25, 26, 28, 29
  Biography of, 17-18
  Birth of, 17
  Brahmins not happy with, 31-32
  Buddhism spread during, 17
  Buddhist Council of, 26
  Dhamma -Vijay policy of, 24, 25, 112, 113
  Initiated into Buddhism, 18-20, 32

Asoka,
Initiated into Buddhism,
After Kalinga war, 18-20
Missionary works by, 27-28
Pillar art of, 153-55
Religious minded, 30, 31
Respect to other religions, 26
Rock & Pillar inscription of 20-21
Assaji, 5
Assam, 42
Asvaghosha, 60-63
Audumbaras, 51
Aurangabad caves, 92, 164
Art of, 181-82
Aurangzeb, 30
Avalokitesvara, 172, 185
Ayodhya, 61

Bacon, Roger, 29
Bagh caves, 190
Bais, Ishwar Singh, 127, 128
Baladitya, 46
Bamiyan, 102
Bana, 39
Bannu, 99
Banyan Grove, 5
Barnet, 200
Barua, Benimadhab, 151
Basham, A.L., 127
Bedsa caves, 92, 93, 164, 182
Bhaddasala, 77
Bhagava, 2
Bhaja caves, 92, 94, 164
Bhandarkar, R.G., 98, 121
Bhankuka, 78
Bharhut,
Inscriptions, 50, 89-90
Stupa at, 50, 136
Bhatt, Kumarila, 129, 130
Bhavaviveka, 75
Bhikkuni Sangha, 7, 8
Bhikkus, 13, 126
Bihar
Buddhism rise in, 46-47
Bimbisara, 4, 11
Bodh Gaya, 2, 47, 57, 76, 84, 101, 128, 155, 261
Bodhidharma, 83-84
Bodhisatta, 1, 2, 37, 42, 75, 77, 230, 236
Bodhi tree, 2, 47, 128, 230
Bodiyar, Ilam, 151
Brahmayoni Hill, 131
Brihadratha, 31, 32
British Museum, 217, 273
Brown, Percy, 165
Buddha, 1-16
Birth of, 1, 248
Brahmins convert of, 117
Death of, 122
Disciples of, 8, 9
Doctrine, 4, 117
First Sermon at Sarnath, 3
Image of, 38, 46
Mortal body of, 12, 13
New knowledge to himself, 2
Path discovered by, 3, 20, 24
Riddle of dates & places, 248
Teachings of, 9, 10, 11, 14
Buddhadatta, 59-60
Buddhaghosha, 57-59, 86
Buddhagupta, 46
Buddhapalita, 75
Buddhavadasi, 137
Buddhism, 3
Asoka adoption of, 26, 27
Inscriptional evidence, 88-112
Missionaries, 77-84
National symbol, 259-78
Art & architecture pattern use, 268
Buddha Jayanti celebrations, 271-73
Buddhist monuments, 261, 268
Buddhist population, 277-78
Calander Reforms Committee,

Buddhism,
National symbol,
Calander Reforms Committee, 266-67
Canons, 35
Democratic principle of, 265-66
Development of, 259
Foreign policy of, 267
Heritage of, 262
Relics recovered, 275-76
Rock & Pillar inscriptions, 259-60, 268
Symbol in National Flag, 262-64
Symbol in Tourism, 267
Welfare State Policy of, 265
Missionary work by Asoka, 27
Pali Scholars of, 53-60
Sanskrit Scholars of, 60-77
Spread of, 13, 14
White elephant symbol of, 22
Why declined, 115-41
Assimilated, 137-38
Brahmin-Buddhist conflict, 116-20
Internal causes, 138-40
Persecution, 128-37
Propaganda of hatred, 120-28
Burgess, James, 201, 206
Burma, 85-86, 113

Candragomin, 150
Candrakirti, 75, 76
Carlleyle, A.C.L., 163
Caste System, 116, 117, 132, 220
Central Asia, 85, 113
Central Museum (Lahore), 217
Ceylon, 18, 28, 57, 58, 59, 77, 78
Chaitya cave temple, 164
Chaityagriha cave, 95.
Chaluka kings, 165
Chamba, 52
Chamtamula, 45
Chanakya, 125
Chan Buddhism, 52, 83, 84, 87
Chandigarh Museum, 216-17
Chandragomin, 76
Chandragupta, 17, 18, 71, 125
Chandragupta II, 46
Chang-an (Sian), 108
Charudatta, 123, 124
Chatterji, Suniti Kumar, 149
Chera kings, 48, 49
Che-ya-in-to-lo, 129
China, 34, 52, 57, 77, 80, 81, 83, 84-85, 113, 261
Cittayamaka, 53
Colebrooke, 247
Culahathipadopana-Sutta, 78
Cunningham, Alexander, 50, 51, 89, 90, 136, 139, 163, 194, 212, 213, 226, 260, 261

Dasgupta, Shashibhushan, 231
Dasgupta, Surendranath, 221, 225
Delhi, 24, 133, 154, 155, 259
Deo Patan, 26
Devanampiya Tissa, 79
Dey, Nandlal, 36
Dhamma, 12, 26, 42, 77, 112, 113, 121, 138
Preservation of, 126
Texts of, 22
Dhammachakra Pravartana, 3
Dhammapala, 60
Dhammaratana, 59
Dhamner caves, 191
Dhanabhuti, 50, 51, 89
Dharmakirti, 72-74, 275
Dharmalaksana school, 83
Dharmarajika Stupa
Sarnath, 136, 212
Taxila, 38, 54
Dharmasutra, 150
Dharmasramin, 135

Dharmatrata, 36, 74
Dhauli Rock inscription, 23, 25, 260
Dhyana, 83, 84
Dikshita, Bhattoji, 121
Dinnaga, 71-72, 73
Dipavamsa, 78
Divakaramitra, 70, 76
Dridhabala, 37
Dutt, Nalinaksha, 147
Dutt, R.C., 242
Dvadasanikaya Sastra, 81, 87

East-Gateway inscription, 50
Ehuvala, 45
Ellora caves, 49, 92, 112, 164, 172, 179-81
  Art of, 179-81
Enlightenment, 2, 26, 62, 12
  Attainment of, 2

Fa-hian, 37, 44, 227
  Indian visit by, 99, 100
  On Monastic life, 99-100
  Testimony, 98-102
Funan, 86
Fur Volker Kunde (Berlin), 217

Gandharas, 27, 33, 34, 129
Gandhi, Indira, 275
Gandhi M.K., 234, 263
Gauhati, 226
Gautama, 1, 2, 34
Gaya, 2, 130, 131, 132, 228, 229
Gaya Asura legend, 130
Gayasirsa Hill, 228
Ghantasila, 125, 126
Ghatotkach caves, 92, 94
Ghosha, 57, 58
Gilgit Manuscripts, 147
Girnar, 2
  Asoka inscriptions, 22, 23, 260
Goethe, 63
Government Museum, Madras, 200-05
  Buddha image at, 200
  Sculptures in, 201-205
    1st period, c.a., 200-100 BC, 201
    2nd period, c.a., 100-AD, 201-02
    3rd period c.a., 150 AD, 202-04
    4th period c.a., 200-250 AD, 204-05
Great Maha Bodhi Temple (Bodh Gaya), 155-58, 226
  Religious subject of, 157-58
Griffiths, 166
Grunwedel, A., 36
Gudivada, Stupa, 137
Guhasiva, 79
Gujarat
  Buddhism rise in, 47
  Buddhist caves in, 188, 189
Guntapalli caves, 189
Gupta kings, 38, 46
Guruge, W.P., 275

Hamilton, Buchanan, 131, 156
Hardayal, 118
Harit, Vradha, 123
Harrapa, 149, 219
Harsh, 138-45, 52, 76, 107, 112, 140
  Army of, 40
  As an author, 42
  Brahmins not happy with, 43
  Buddhism during, 42-45
  Kingdom extended by, 40-41
  Maha Moksha Parishad, 43
  Meeting with Divakaramitra, 40
  Rise of, 38-41
  Stupas by, 41
  Welfare works by, 41
Haryana, 50, 75
Himachal Pradesh, 50, 51, 133

Hinayana, 138
Hinduism, 122, 222, 234
Hinduism & Buddhism, 219-34
  After Buddhism decline, 229, 230
  Buddha against bloody sacrifices, 221, 222
  Buddha against caste system, 219-222
  Comparison of scriptures, 222-25, 232
    Gita, 223-24
    Mahabharata, 222
    Upanishads, 224-26
  Philosophy of life in, 231
  Soul doctrine in, 223
  Viharas converted into temples, 226
Hindu temples
  Malpractices, 127, 134
  Hiuen Tsang, 35, 36, 37, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 47, 48, 52, 60, 76, 83, 128, 155, 162, 213, 256, 261
  Becomes Bhikshu, 109-10
  Buddhist monks survey by, 102-12
  Translation work by, 111
  Visit to India by, 102
Hussnain, F.M., 129
Huvishka, 38

Ikshvaku rules, 45, 46
India,
  Asoka cave inscriptions, 21
  Asoka major pillar edicts, 21
  Asoka major rock edicts, 20, 23, 24, 25
  Asoka minor pillar edicts, 21, 23
  Asoka minor rock edicts, 20, 21, 22, 23
  Asoka separate rock edict, 20
Indian Museum (Calcutta), 154, 194, 200
Indian Museum (Calcutta),
  Bharhut Gallery, 197, 198
  Bharhut Sculptures at, 195, 196
  Buddhist monuments, 194
  Gandhara Gallery, 198, 199
  Jetavana sculptures, 196
  Long Gallery, 199, 200
Indonesia, 86-87
I-tsing, 61, 65, 74, 86
Itthiya, 77

Jagannath Temple (Puri), 227, 228
Jagat Singh, 136, 213
Jainism, 7, 117
  Decline of, 246, 247
  Inscriptions, 247
Jainism & Buddhism, 235-51
  Buddha edge over Mahavira, 237
  Buddha junior to Mahavira, 238
  Canon of, 241-43
  Code of discipline for monks, 240
  Enlightenment of, 235-36
  Jaina converts, 238
  Jaina system, 237
  Language of scriptures, 241, 242, 245, 246
  Noble Truths in, 239-40
  Preaching tours, 237-38
  Riddle of dates & places, 248-51
  Salvation, 238
  Scriptures comparison in, 243-47
  Soul doctrine of, 239
  Spiritual path in, 240
Jalalabad, 102
Jalandhara, 52
Japan, 87, 113
Jatilas, 4
Jatti, B.D., 274
Jaugada Rock edict, 29

Java, 86
Jeta, 6, 7
Jetavana, 7, 100
Jettha, 78
Jivaka, 11
Jinendrabodhi, 150
Jnana-prabha, 108, 110
Jones, William, 259
Joshi, L.M., 140, 149
Julien, M. Stanisla, 261
Jullundur, 35, 36, 76, 103
Junagadh group of caves, 189
Junnar caves, 92, 94, 164, 183

Kabir, 122, 123, 231, 232, 233,
Kadphises, 34
Kajangola, 54
Kalama, Alara, 1, 9
Kalidas, 62
Kalinga, 17, 18, 74, 79, 132
Kalsi Rock inscription, 23, 24
Kaludayi, 5
Kambojas, 27
Kampuchea, 86, 113
Kanauj, 40, 107
Kanchi, 52, 83
Kanchipuram, 52
Kandy, 80
Kangra, 51, 52, 134
Kanheri caves, 92, 95, 96, 164, 184-86
Kanishka, 34-38, 60, 74, 112, 140
  Art & Architecture of, 37-38
  Buddhism during, 34-35
  Buddhism propaganda by, 37
  Buddhist council by 35-36
  Kharoshthi inscription, 38
  Kingdom extended by, 34-35
  Stupas by, 37
Kant, 63
Kapalisvara temple (Chezarla), 46
Kapilavastu, 1, 5, 6, 7, 235, 275
Karad caves, 92, 96
Karla caves, 92, 96, 164, 186
Kashgir, 102
Kashmir, 26, 34, 36, 47-48, 80, 81, 103, 129
Kasia, 164
Kassapa, 4
Kashyap, Jagdish, 144, 152
Kasyapa Matanga, 80
Katantra, 150
Katju, Kailash Nath, 268, 269, 270
Katharatthu, 53
Katyayana, 36
Kaundinya, 101
Kausalyayan, Bhadant Anand, 152
Kausambi, 101
Kerala
  Buddhism rise in, 48-49
Khadge dynasty, 52
Khajuraho, 127, 128
Khambhaldia caves, 189
Kinnaur, 51
Kittoe, 136
Kol caves, 191
Kolvi caves, 192
Konark, 127
Kondane caves, 92
Kondivite caves, 92
Korea, 87, 113
Kosam, 22
Kosambi, Dharmananda, 151
Kottoe, M., 260
Krishnamurthy, K., 206
Ksemagupta, 129
Kucha, 80, 81, 102
Kulkarni, A.R., 230
Kumarajiva, 63, 80-82
Kumaralata, 74
Kunda caves, 92, 96, 97
Kunindas, 51
Kushanas, 34, 140
Kushinagar, 100, 129
Kusinara, 13, 26, 122, 163
Kutagara, 7

Ladakh, 48
Lahaul, 51
Lakkhanapanha, 55
Lalitaditya, 48
Lauriya-Araraj Pillar, 154
Le Corbusier, 216
Levi, S., 63
Lincoln, Abraham, 29
Literature, 143-52
  Contribution to language, 148-52
    Modern Indian languages, 151
    Pali, 150, 151
    Sanskrit, 150
    Tamil, 151
  Pali canon, 143-47, 149
    Non-canonical Pali works, 146-47
  Sanskrit scriptures, 147-48
    Non-canonical Sanskrit works, 148
Liu-Kuang, 81
Lokottarevadin School of Maha-sanghikas, 148
Limbini, 1, 26, 30, 235
  Asoka Pillar edict, 30, 154

Mackenzie, John, 190
Madhuban inscription, 39
Madhyamika School of Buddhist-Philosophy, 45, 63, 64, 81
Madhya Pradesh
  caves in, 190, 191
Magadha, 4, 17, 20, 46, 101, 128
Magar, 122, 123
Maha Bodhi monastry, 108, 109
Maha Bodhi Society of India, 261, 268, 270, 274, 275, 277,
  Naugarh centre of, 275
Maha Bodhi Temple, 38, 261, 262
Mahad caves, 92, 98, 164, 187
Mahanama, 58
Mahaparinirvana, 13, 26, 112, 162, 164, 215, 248, 271
Maharashtra, 49
  Buddhist caves in, 49, 91-98, 164
Mahavamsa, 53, 57, 78
Mahavastu, 148
Mahavihara, 58
Mahavira, 235, 236, 237, 262
  Birth of, 236, 237
Mahayana, 35, 38, 57, 227
Mahenjodoro, 149
Mahinda, 18, 28, 77-80
Mahtab, Hare Krushna, 227
Maitreyanatha, 148
Maitriya, 123, 124
Malaya, 113
Malvania, Dalsukh, 72, 73
Malwa, 39
Mandi, 52
Manimekalai, 151
Manmodi Hill, 184
Manushi Buddhas, 162
Manu smriti, 32
Mara, 2, 236
Marshall, John, 190
Mathura, 38, 99, 276, 277
  Inscription, 50, 51
  Museum, 215, 216
Matrceta, 74
Maudgelyayana, 62
Meerut, 154
Migara, 7
Mihirakula, 47, 129
Milinda, 33, 34, 54, 55, 56, 57
  Buddhism during, 33-34
Milinda-panha, 146
Milton, 63
Ming of Han dynasty, 80
Mitra, Rajindralal, 130, 229
Moggaliputta Tissa, 19, 53-54, 77
Moggallana, 5, 50, 260, 268, 270, 271, 273
Mohenjodaro, 219
Mokshacharya, 109
Monastery, 7, 45
  Kanishka, 37

Monastery,
Nagarjuna, 45
Mongolia, 113
Monks, 5, 42, 54, 125, 262
Mookerjee, R.K., 121
Mookerjee, Shyama Prasad, 270
Moti Chandra, 194
Mriccha Katika, 123
Mummuni, 129
Musee Guimet (Paris), 217
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 217
Museums, 191-217
Muslims, 134, 140
Destroyed Buddhist shrines, 134, 135
Invasions by, 134, 135
Mysore, 17

Nadagutta, 151
Nadsur caves, 92
Nagarahara, 102
Nagarjuna, 45, 63, 67, 75, 81
Nagarjunakonda, 45, 46, 209
Museum, 209-11
Nagasena, 33, 54-57
Nair, V.G., 225
Nalanda, 42, 46, 72, 76, 107, 134, 144
University, 135, 211
Nalanda Museum, 211-12
Nanda, 6, 17, 61, 62, 121
Nanjio, Buniyo, 147
Catalogue, 82
Narasimhagupta, 46
Narasuha, R.L., 119, 222
Narla, V.R., 126, 136
Nasik,
Cave inscription, 49, 91, 92, 97, 98, 164, 167-88
National Museum (New Delhi), 191-93
Archaeological Gallery, 192
Sculptures in, 192
Nehru, Jawaharlal, 262, 265, 267, 268, 269, 273
Neranvli caves, 92
Nepal, 20, 26, 261
Pillar inscription, 21
Neranjararive, 2
Nettipakarana, 146
Nibbana, 3
Nigliva, 154
Nigrodha, 18
Nirguna Saints, 233
Nirvana, 11, 12, 24, 56, 117, 224, 233
Attainment of, 12
Compassion on all creatures, 12
Elimination of passions, 12
Self controled, 12
Nirvana Temple (Kusinara), 162, 164

Odentapuri, 134
Oertel, F.C., 213

Pakistan, 20
Rock edicts, 21
Pali Publication Board, 144
Pallava dynasty, 52
Panchvargiya Bhikkhus, 4
Pandit Vijaya Lakshmi, 273
Paramartha, 82-83
Parivrajakas, 1, 2
Parsva, 74
Pataliputra, 18, 53, 100, 102, 143
Patanjali, 58, 121, 222
Patna Museum, 216
Peppe, W.C., 275, 276
Perumal, Bana, 48
Perumal, Jayasimha, 48
Perundevanar, 151
Peshawar, 37, 102
Great Tope (Stupa), 37, 103
Museum, 217
Petapodadesa, 146
Piggot, 219
Piprahwa ruins, 275, 276

Pitalkhora caves, 92, 98, 164, 188
Polier, 259
Prabhakaravardhana, 39
Prabhamitra, 76
Prajnaparamita sutra, 64
Prasenajit of Pasendi, 7
Pratityasamputpada-hridaya sastra, 64
Pravarsena, 129
Pre-Aryan civilization, 219
Prince of Wales Museum (Bombay), 193-94
Prinsep, James, 260
Priyadarsi, Davanampriya, 121
Przyluski, 51
Punjab, 49-52, 133, 257
Purans, 125, 130, 131, 137
Purnvarma, 47
Purusottamadeva, 150
Pushyamitra, 31, 32, 33, 128

Radhakrishnan, S., 36, 138, 233, 271, 273
Rahula, 1, 100
Ordination of, 6
Rahula Walpola, 79
Rajabhata, 52
Rajasthan, 133
Buddhist caves in, 188, 191
Rajendra Prasad, 262
Rajyasri, 39, 40
Rajyavardhana, 39, 128
Ramaputta, Uddaka, 1
Rameswaram, 130
Ranar, Sat, 151
Rangpur, 219
Ranjit Singh, 30
Ratna bodhi, 135
Rea, Alexander, 137, 210, 206
Revata, Ven, 135
Rohana, Ven, 54
Rudra Sena I, 47
Rupar, 219

Sagala, 55
Saha, Meghnath, 266
Sakyamuni, 2
Sambala, 77
Sambodhi, 26
Sambuddha, 2
Samudragupta, 46
Sanah caves, 189
Sanchi, 18, 22, 28, 54, 154, 271
Inscriptions, 90-91
Stupa, 158-59, 260
Decorations & Scenes, 162 ;s,
Historical events, 161, 162
Jatakas, 161
Scene of Buddha life, 158-59
Sangavarunor, 151
Sangha, 4, 5, 121
Sakya prince joined the, 6
Sanghabhadra, 75
Sanjaya, 5
Sankaracarya, 130, 225, 226
Sankaram caves, 189
Sankheyya monastery, 54
Sankrityayan, Rahul, 112, 152
Santideva, 77
Saranadeva, 150
Sariputraprakarana, 62
Sariputta, 5, 6, 50, 260, 270, 271
Sarnath, 2, 3, 5, 22, 26, 135, 136, 154, 212, 213, 222, 228, 262, 273
Museum, 212-15
Sarvajnadeva, 65
Sasanka, 128
Satakarni, Yajnasri, 45, 63
Satarahana monastery, 45, 49, 63, 65
Saundarananda, 61
Shaolin monastery, 83
Shelarwadi caves, 92, 98
Sher Singh, 253
Shirwal caves, 92
Shivneri Hill, 183
Sialkot, 33

Siddhartha, 1
  Anxious on human suffering, 1
  Left Kapilavastu, 1
Sigalasutta, 24
Siggava, 53
Sikhism, 254
Sikhism & Buddhism, 253-58
  Caste system, 254
  Heritage of, 257-58
  Religious headship in, 255-256
  Sikhism younger to Buddhism, 253
  Teaching of, 254
  Truths in, 255
  Worshipping in, 253
Silabhadra, 110
Silappadikaram, 151
Simukha, 49
Sinha, Sri Krishna, 271
Smith, V.A., 121, 134, 153
Socrates, 29
Social ceremonies, 139
Sravasti, 6, 7
Sri Lanka, 27, 28, 58, 77, 78, 79, 86, 102, 113, 143, 261
Srimeghavana, 46
Srimulavasam, 48
Srinagar, 48
Sringeri Math, 226
Sri-parvata, 45
Srivastava, K.M., 275, 276
Sri-Vijaya, 86-87
State Museum (Lucknow), 216
Stevenson, 246
Subramanyam, K., 206
Sudatta, 6
Suddhanvan, 129, 130
Suddhodena, 5, 6, 7, 137
Sugata, 2, 39
Suhrllekha, 65
Sujata, 2
Suket, 52
Sumatra, 86
Sungas, 121
Sunita, 9
Surasena, 55
Suri, Maladharin Devaprabha, 247
Suri, Vimala, 247

Tagore, Rabindranath, 152
Talaja caves, 189
Tamil Nadu, 52
Tamrahparni (Sri Lanka), 27
Tamralipti university, 52
Tantrism, 126
Taranatha, 36, 75
Tathagata, 2, 12
Taxila, 34, 103, 107
Thailand, 86, 113
Thanale caves, 92
Thanesar, 39, 40
Thera, N. Jinaratananayaka, 275
Theravadins, 57
Tibet, 65, 87, 113, 261
Tieffenthaler, Padre, 259
Tissa, 28, 53
Tod, James, 260
Tooth Relic (Dalada Maligawa) Temple, 79
Topra Pillar (New Delhi), 24
Travancore, 48
Trikandesesa, 151
Tripitaka, 53, 58, 77, 144
  Abhidhamma, 58, 144, 146
  Sutta-Pitaka, 144, 145, 146
  Vinaya Pitaka, 144
Tz'uen monastery, 108

Udayana, 103
Udito, 52
Ujjain, 18
Untouchables, 132, 133
  Buddhists, 133
  Gurus of, 133
Upadhayaya, Kashi Nath, 224
Upali, 6, 143
Uruvela, 2, 4, 5, 235
Usavadata, 49
Uttiya, 77

Vaidya, C.V., 45
Vaipulya sutras, 147, 148
Vaisali, 7, 100, 143, 154, 236
Vajrasana, 108
Vajrayana, 126
Valabhi, 47
Varagunam, 48
Varanasi, 4, 102
Vardhana dynasty, 39
Varuna, 4
Vasa, 5
Vasishta, 38
Vasubandhu, 46, 69, 70, 71
Vasudeva, 38
Vasumitra, 35, 36
Vidisa, 18
Verma, Damodra, 46
Vesettha sutta, 117
Vidyabhusan, Satish Chandra, 151
Vietnam, 86, 113
Viharas, 6, 7, 48
  Destroyed, 129
Vijayamitra, 33
Vikramasila, 134
Vimala, 4
Vimuticchedana, 55
Vinaya, 53
Virasena, 55
Visuddhimagga, 58, 59, 147
Vishnupada temple (Gaya), 228, 229, 230
Voltaire, 63

Wadell, L.A., 36
Wai caves, 92
Wells, H.G., 29
Wescott, G.H., 123
West Bengal, 52
Wheel (Dharma Chakra), 34
Winternitz, Maurice, 247
Woman
  Ordination to, 7, 8
World Fellowship of Buddhists, 273, 274

Yae-Hian, 81
Yajnavalkya, 125
Yasa (Yasoda), 4
Yasodhara, 6, 7
Yasomitra, 70
Yavanas, 27
Yogacara, 70
Yueh-chi, 38

Zen Buddhism, 52, 84, 87
Zetland, 265